

# **THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF AFRICA**

**CHALLENGES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

**Edited by  
Paul Nchoji Nkwi**



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# ANTHROPOLOGY IN AFRICA: Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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Edited by

Paul Nchoji Nkwi



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### **The Anthropology of Africa: Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

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The study of human diversity has fascinated social thinkers and driven the biological study of humankind to the brink of virtually asserting the discovery of God. Far from it. The Human Genome project testifies to the constant search for a better understanding of what we humans are. As a discipline, anthropology seeks to generate knowledge and build generalities about all human cultures and African peoples and cultures are no exception. The discipline has undergone significant changes in the last two decades and it is facing a number of challenges.

The discipline has witnessed a rapid increase in the number of anthropologists engaged in cross-cultural development research work, acting as cultural brokers and seeking to integrate anthropological perspectives and methods in the planning and implementation of development projects. The main challenge is how to maintain this profile for many years to come by establishing a professional niche that will rehabilitate a discipline battered by colonialism.

Given the nature of social transformation in Africa, the discourse on culture and development will linger on for many decades. Colonized and dominated by Western cultures, the process of neo-colonialism continues today in various forms. The educational system is basically Western, the visions are still Western, development perceptions are still Western. The whole discourse on how culture and development can become bed partners highlights the notion of how Western responses to biological needs can be replaced by African responses. As long as Africa continues to transform its young socially through an education process that is not African, the emergence of an indigenous development, or development with an African face, is still many decades away.

For years, the whole process of change or planned change known as development has advocated the understanding of the cultural underpinnings of human societies that would lead to practical action and policy. A diachronic analysis of culture and development has demonstrated that the 1920s and 1930s were dominated by functionalist paradigms and models which shaped

the development process in the colonies where African populations and their social institutions were seen as functionally integrated, each contributing in its own way to social reproduction. But, today; the discourse looks at culture as not existing in a vacuum but as determined by historical forces that shaped planned change.

In recent years, postmodernism has articulated the notion of multi-vocality in which cultural insights are seen as providing a dynamic critique of development and pushing thought and practice away from other systemic models and dualities. The traditional is seen as opposed to modern; formal to informal; developed to underdeveloped (Gardner and Lewis, 1996: 19ff). It has captured the minds of African intellectual who have failed to understand that the anthropological theory of cultural relativism was many years ahead of today's post-modernists. The major challenge faced by African anthropologists is how to work with other disciplines integrating their theories and practices into anthropological reflections. Inter-disciplinarity, trans-disciplinarity as well as multi-disciplinarity calls for a greater understanding of theoretical developments in other social sciences and how to work together to find solutions to human problems

The last 50 years have witnessed shifting global relations marked by the decline of colonialism, the cold war, and the need for capitalism to find new markets. The concept of emerging markets places Africa on the centre stage of the global process. Globalisation makes the world one single global village where drugs, styles in dress, eating habits, attitudes to sexuality and all other forms of human behaviour will transcend physical frontiers and cultural borders. Cultural norms or ways of life will penetrate other cultures with ease and facility never before known in human history. Everything will be seen on a large scale, making it difficult for local cultures (micro) to articulate themselves (cf. UNESCO, 1994). African anthropologists face the challenge of monitoring and evaluating the cultural invasion of Africa for globalization as an unequal and asymmetrical phenomenon. The anthropology of Africa should in future study closely the backlash that globalization is likely to produce or reproduce in the years ahead.

The end of imperialism in Africa in early 1960s was marked by theories of modernization which saw the emergence of neo-Marxist theories of unequal exchange and dependency in the 1970s. In the 1980s, many African students of culture coined the bandwagon of Marxism because anthropology was under intense criticism for its utilitarian role during the imperial domination of the continent. From the 1960s through the 1980s, most of our colleagues operated «underground» in departments of social sciences, calling themselves sociologists or social science analysts in order to gain acceptability in an

academic world hostile to the discipline. Anthropology, as handmaiden of colonialism, exposed itself to the hyper-criticism of social philosophers, political scientists and African nationalists. Being a Marxist anthropologist in the 1970s and 1980s was gaining more legitimacy, visibility and acceptance. Marxism offered a radical social and political struggle against imperialism, the enemy of African nationalist movements.

The development discourse “of the 1990s which focused on good governance, institution building and gender equity acknowledged the debacle of the modernization theory, emphasizing economic growth and modernity, and defined development as economic growth, technological sophistication, urbanization, high levels of consumption and a wide range of social and cultural changes. The crisis of the 1980s and the need to restructure African economies have dominated the development agenda of the 1990s. The search for alternative models and paradigms to development opened a window of opportunity to anthropology as African anthropologists were increasingly being hired as consultants by governments and development agencies. Applied anthropology, it must be remembered, has its dangers. We can either make or mar it. The survival of the discipline will depend on how we address the demands of a fast changing world, how we adapt to changing conditions within the discipline and how creatively the discipline can work closely with other social sciences.

Most African anthropologists are engaged in applied anthropology. In North America and in the greater part of Europe, applied anthropology is not considered anthropology. According to this view, anthropology is primarily theoretical and academic, building generalities about humankind and human behaviour. However, for historical reasons, most African anthropologists are concentrating their energies and resources in applied work, addressing daily problems that local communities face. They see both theoretical and applied anthropology as complementing one another. Furthermore, development imperatives and funding difficulties are often such that African anthropologists cannot afford the luxury of pure and fundamental research. While basic research is important, there is a strong belief that data from applied research can be used in theory-building. Articles in this present volume show why and how applied anthropology is an inevitable option for African anthropologists working in Africa.

These proceedings of the ninth conference of the Pan African Anthropological Association address most of the applied issues including HIV/AIDS, environment, ethnicity and ethnic conflicts, high fertility, the African family, gender and development. These are problems African peoples face every day, and anthropology cannot afford to be indifferent. The feeling is

that we cannot turn our backs to the people who provided us with the data and information that helped shape our careers. Development efforts are designed to satisfy basic needs of the people, we must be part of this struggle. How can anthropology creatively and innovatively be part of this daily struggle? This is the challenge. How can people be better fed, better educated, better housed and healthier? The gap between the rich and the poor is growing wider and wider, and issues of poverty are assuming a central position. This is again the challenge.

In recent years, debates on the teaching and practice of anthropology have focused on professionalism. In this regard, many think that anthropologists should assert their professional identity, commit themselves to creating jobs for themselves in order to minimize the trappings of dependency, and develop methodological and other skills that would enable them to market themselves better. The theoretical and professional training of students in inter-disciplinarity is therefore considered critical for anthropologists of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This reflection is cast against the background of the state of African universities. The situational analysis highlights three concepts that can be applied to three categories of African anthropologists: brain-drain; brain circulation and brain-haemorrhage anthropologists.

In the 1970s and 1980s, many African anthropologists left for greener pastures in the North and have continued to exploit the opportunities in publishing and making the anthropology of Africa visible. As part of the brain-drain, they found the enabling environment in Northern universities and today, most of them are part of the mainstream anthropology of the North. The likes of Maxwell Owusu best represent a latter version of the Busia. The second categories of African anthropologists are those who remained in their poorly-funded universities and institutions hoping they would improve the situations. Instead of fleeing North, they found professional niches on the continent, permitting the use of their brain for the development of the discipline. The Archie Mafejes, the Kwesi Prah, Memel Fote and many others belong to this category. They have circulated and are still circulating moving from one centre to another sharing their knowledge and experience with the less fortunate. With minimal resources and consulting possibilities, the brain-circulators have survived and kept the discipline afloat without leaving the continent. The concept of brain-circulation can also be applied frequent exchange programs that permit Africans to spend limited time in non-African institutions. The concept of brain-circulation implies that Africa is the home base.

On the other hand, many of our colleagues have suffered from brain-haemorrhage by abandoning both academic and professional work entirely,



and sought solace and radical means of survival beyond the walls of academia. They perform any function or activity to survive, except practice anthropology. Some have moved into the informal sector where money can be made and publish or perish is out of the question. Therefore, the greatest challenge in the future is how to stay afloat in a world that will continue to be competitive, technologically oriented and professionally challenging. The acquisition of vital skills should begin earlier. Training programs in our universities must address the problems confronting all young graduates: finding employment. The dialogue between academic training and applied skills must continue, and both should mutually influence one another. Students must be constantly exposed to the challenges of the future workplace, and training must be designed to address these Challenges. Anthropologists and anthropological knowledge will continue to be useful in project design and implementation. The increasing involvement of Anthropologists in project design and implementation must become more critical and feed into the teaching programs of African universities. Anthropology can no more remain in its ivory tower and pretend to be theoretical while our primary sources, the people rot under the intense impact of poverty. The anthropology of Africa will remain for a long time, fundamentally applied if it is to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## From *Gateway* to *Gatekeeper*: Anthropology: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

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### Abstract

*This paper discusses the transition process of anthropology as an academic discipline in Africa. Although, anthropology is viewed as an archaic discipline, it is now being realized that it is relevant to modern society. As a result, it is a dynamic discipline. Initially, anthropology functioned as “gateway” to African cultures during the colonial era, but today, it remains a “gatekeeper”. Africanists and African anthropologists now challenge some misconceptions about African societies apart from reconstructing the history of the continent. This paper is an attempt to examine the discipline in a continuum. In doing this, the paper discusses its colonial origin, its contemporary role and what the future holds for it. Evidences abound that among social science disciplines, it enjoys low patronage hence, the dearth of professionals in Africa. While the majority of the professionals are foreign-trained, foreign literature still dominates our libraries. Apart from this, the government does not adequately recognize its relevance to development; hence, there is low employment opportunity. Foreign experts are invited to analyse our culture, making the target problems more complex than they met them. The current development issues all over the world therefore suggest new roles for the discipline. Hence, anthropology needs to assume a prominent position in development purposes of Africa in the new millennium, which is “preceded by dwindling resources and clouded with uncertainty and fear of the unknown, catastrophes, and crises which require relevant and responsive theoretical and methodological applications in the teaching and learning of anthropology.*

### Introduction

The basic aim of this paper is to build upon and suggest an extension of a continental network of anthropologists concerned with the development of new methods of teaching and learning which are working to equip students with the disciplinary and transferable skills-analytical, organizational and practical-needed for employment outside academics. To achieve this, the paper

examines the transitional process of the discipline in Africa as both “gateway” and “gatekeeper”.

Anthropology in Africa has long had relatively low status among social science disciplines, and studies of the various African social groups have been secondary in importance to other themes. Today, in contrast, the question of culture is being intensively discussed in connection with the debate on the construction of democratic Africa and popular participation in the future of the continent. The so-called “New Republic” that came into being with the end of colonialism has created the need for the study of culture even though anthropology was relegated to the background as an archaic discipline. A major limitation of anthropology is that it is perceived as being concerned with the study of small-scale societies and at the same time “ethnocentric.”

As a result, the growth of anthropology has remained very slow in Africa compared with other social science disciplines. This paper, therefore, is divided into four parts: anthropology as foreign agents; between universalism and indigenization anthropology today; Teaching and learning anthropology; and conclusion.

### **Anthropology as Foreign Agent**

In the words of Mafeje (1996), “there is no drama, without characters.” The colonial anthropologists were greater characters and personable persons, among whom were Malinowski, Radcliffe Brown, and Evans Pritchard. All these played a significant role as principal actors in anthropological enterprises in Africa. As noted, Mafeje (1996) argued that by virtue of their class background, the first generation of British anthropologists in Africa enjoyed as much power as the colonial administrators with whom they collaborated in developing what became known as applied anthropology.” He mentioned names such as the Selig mans, Nadel, and Evans-Pritchard in Sweden, J. G. Jones in Nigeria, Audrey Richards in Uganda, Mitchell in Rhodesia, Lestrade, Van Warmelo, Odendaal, and Hammond Tooke in South Africa. “Likewise, Daryll Forde did his best from the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) in London.”

In London, the profession tried intermittently to persuade the government that anthropology could indeed help in the affairs of colonial rule. By the mid-1920s, the nature of the interface between scholarly and administrative interests in Africa had become clearer.

The next generation of British anthropologists, such as Victor Turner, Mary

Douglas, John Beattie and a number of their contemporaries from the Manchester school who came to Africa during the period leading to independence “were not empire builders but also they took no particular interest in the colonial government”. Nevertheless, “they still enjoyed some prestige and respectability”.

Anthropology began to lose its prestige and influence following the independence of British colonies and this affected the British anthropologists who came to Africa during this period. Such anthropologists include: Cardine Hutton, Ann Sharmon, Suzette Healed, Joan Vincent. Rachel Yeld and Sandy Robertson. This greatly affected their works and influenced their perception as noted by “the political and ideological environment was hostile. They were under pressure to account for themselves. They responded by being generally anti-colonial, and denounced structural functionalism. They avoided tribal studies like plague and opted for thematic topics which focused on processes of transformation.” (Mafeje 1996)

This picture reveals a decline in the status of anthropology in Africa with the attainment of independence. As a result, the success of anthropologists under this dispensation depends on the “acquiescence of Africans. For instance, Levis Strauss (1966) expressed appreciation of the growing hostility in developing countries towards anthropology, which, he admitted, has been part of the appalling violent process of domination that established and maintained colonialism.” He asserted that anthropology must undergo a transformation and disengage itself from the colonial system for it to be viewed as legitimate by Africans. Anthropology during the colonial period through independence did remain as “gateway” by which African cultures were understudied and replaced by western ones. It was mostly serving colonial empire builders. This condition also affected the status of anthropology in the United Kingdom for which Anthropology in Action swung into action to reactivate anthropology in the United Kingdom under a project “Teaching and Learning Social Anthropology in the United Kingdom” (MascarenhasKeyes and Wright 1995) at a Conference held at the Middlesex University in which I was in attendance. The conference noted that anthropology declined in influence with the collapse of colonialism. As a result, government funding stopped, and there was no employment for anthropologists, since no role could be identified for them in the contemporary society. The reason why anthropology was considered as an archaic discipline.

## Between Universalism and Independence

In his article, “the crisis of British Anthropology”, Banaji (1970) argued that since the end of the Second World War, British Anthropology faced two problems which, as noted by Mafeje (1998), could not be resolved; first, he suggested that, born out of imperialism, the discipline was unable to adapt to an anti-imperial world. This was made even harder by the simple fact that its traditional subject matter and units of analysis were no longer applicable in a changing colonial world. Second, he believed that because it had failed to respond to the challenge of structuralism, functionalist anthropology was stagnating or in a crisis. Following from this, a gap exists between universalism and indigenization. There was a shift from western views of phenomena to African perceptions. This is because British Anthropologists were accused of ethnocentrism. In fact, Godard (1969) had attributed the decline of British Anthropologists not to the anti-colonial struggle, but rather to the relegation of the human identity to the ‘primitive’ in a colonial setting. In his view, this made it possible for anthropologists to eschew universal questions regarding humanity. As a result, as far back as 1970, Mafeje, in his work on the ‘Ideology of Tribalism’, criticized European ethnocentrism and made a spontaneous call for indigenization of social scientific concepts. This assertion was similar to Magubane’s (1971) work. Reviewing the two works, it was argued that:

*The two articles by Mafeje and Magubane have been among the most interesting studies of the anthropology/colonialism relationship. Each is concerned with the way in which one area of anthropological theory has been related to a specific part of the colonial system. Each makes an analysis in terms of the subjected sector of colonial society. An attempt has been made to expose ideology from inside. Hooker and Levi Strauss among others had made an appeal for such a form of analysis. It is worthwhile noting that of all contributors to the recent debate; only these two have been in a position to draw on the indigenous African experience (Marfleet in Mafeje 1998).*

Many African scholars, such as Akiwowo, have called for indigenisation of knowledge as demonstrated in his works such as ‘Ajobi and Ajogbe: variations in the Themes of sociation’ (1983), ‘Asuwada Eniyan’ (1986a), and ‘Contributions to Sociology of Knowledge from African Oral Poetry’ (1986b).

British anthropologists, in a bid to be universal, viewed other cultures in relation to their own. As a result they defined modernization as a sort of conformity to western culture. In fact, Ghaffar, as noted by Mafeje (1998), was aware of the fact that there was a strong undercurrent among African intellectuals as indicated by his reference to Brokesha’s observation that:

“Most African intellectuals are best indifferent to, or mildly tolerant of, social anthropology, and frequently they have a strong feeling of hostility to the subject and its practitioners. This attitude is reflected in the small number of Africans who study the Subject; when Kenyatta, Aziwe, or Busia were students of anthropology in the 1930s, there was a very different climate, and it was not thought strange or inappropriate that they should concentrate on anthropology. But today, British anthropologists face a difficult time, with little understanding or encouragement from their own society (Brokensha 1966: 16 quoted by Ghaffar in Asad 1973: 260).

Akinwowo’s defence of indigenization of sociology is equally relevant. According to him: “The idea is that sociology can benefit from home-grown ideas contained in African oral literature upon western concepts and theoretical assumptions (Akiwowo 1983).

Furthermore he stated that: “Nigeria social scientists in general and sociologists in particular have an obligation of recycling what are elements in our world view into their explanatory and analytical studies of present or future social conditions of existence, and to the development of new knowledge about this and other societies.” He called the theoretical aspect of his work “fruitful alternatives” to western theories. He also dealt with the application of sociological insights to the problem of social welfare and social development.

Although Akiwowo has received many criticisms of which Lawuyi and Taiwo (1990) were prominent, he has gained more influence. Payne (1992) in his article “Akiwowo, Orature and Divination: Approaches to the construction of Emic Sociological Paradigm of Society” commented that: “Through his (Akiwowo) use of Yoruba Orature in general and Yoruba divination orature in particular, Akiwowo deftly springs to the forefront of African sociologists who propose to construct more relevant models of African society from which to employ ‘Ifongbontayese’”.

Akiwowo’s proposal for indigenization of anthropology, or African sociology, was given further driving force at the symposium on ‘Universalism and Indigenization of Sociological Theory’, which he organized at the Xth World conference of Sociology in Mexico City in 1982, the outcome of which was published in a maiden issue of the journal of International Sociology (1988, 3, 2: 155-199).

## **Anthropology Today**

The thinking of African scholars on the status or relevance of anthropology to contemporary society oscillates between extremes.



Sometimes, it is considered as an archaic discipline which has no place in the current dispensation, because it studies small-scale societies which British anthropologists referred to as 'primitive societies'. On the other hand, some view it as a relevant discipline to modern society. Anthropology has given considerable attention to the way of life of the people producing studies on several aspects of life. Anthropology is still not enjoying equal status with other social science disciplines today in Africa. Apart from the fact that there are few professionals, it is not enjoying government patronage like other social science disciplines. There are few source of financial support for anthropological studies. As a result, students shy away from the discipline.

It should be realized that anthropology has much to contribute to the contemporary society. It can study society in-depth and reveal new knowledge about cultural features.

For instance, it has studied various aspects of the ways of life of people producing among others studies of peasants (Mafeje 1985, 1993a), large-scale farming (Mafeje 1969), religion (Akiwowo 1979; Adewale 1998), Health (Oke 1996; Oke et al 1989, Jegede 1994, 1995, 1998, Jegede and Onoja 1993), conflict (Otite and Albert 1999, Jegede 1997, 1999) and, poverty (Mafeje 1993b).

Today, anthropology is serving as "gateway" in that it helps to study African cultures and analyses them objectively from within. It helps to preserve our antiquities for future generations thereby creating history. In his work, "The Presence of the Past; Otite (1992) notes the role of history in development. For him, it is imperative to employ the past to understand the present and project the future. Anthropology is in a position to perform this function.

Apart from this, anthropology has the capacity to study the present situation in the light of contemporary problem. For instance, it is now widely used in health research to determine factors responsible for use or non-use of health services, epidemics, ill health and interpersonal relationship in health facilities, among others, Unlike in the past, when health workers viewed illness mainly from a western perspective, anthropology has made it possible for physicians and patients to negotiate and arrive at a common definition of a particular health condition (Jegede 1998). Therefore, it encourages local perception of health.

Generally speaking, the potential of anthropology is still very much untapped in Africa, as policy-makers give it little or no recognition. Since this is the situation, what next as we enter the new millennium?

## Teaching and Learning Anthropology

Now it is important to think of how to raise the status of anthropology in Africa. To do this, we have to consider teaching and learning. The import of this is that it helps to pass on the knowledge. But the question remains: what do we teach? Do we continue teaching the classical areas (Kinship, politics, economics, religion and ritual, theory and ethnography)? If yes, how do we teach? With what skills? And with what outcome? Although these classical areas shall continue to be taught, there is need to include new areas in order to meet the challenges of the modern world and technology. It is important to make anthropological training computer-based so that it can meet new challenges. Also training in vocational practice and transferable skills should be offered in order to make the discipline available to many at all levels. This will enhance employment opportunity in specific sectors.

On how anthropology should be taught and learnt, there is need for a range of teaching that will help to foster 'deep learning'. There is need to give students hands-on experience by requiring that they do empirical work. Effort should also be made to focus not only on the content of learning but also the process, for instance, by making students keep logs which will later be assessed. Assessment should also involve oral presentations, class participation, group work and reflections in learning.

There is need to improve the learning environment through such mechanisms as 'theses-aid groups', peer support groups for new students, linking between students of different years, regional/national forums for postgraduates to make students voices heard in different forums.

In order to enhance teaching skills, there is need for national discipline-specific training programs which would equip teachers with expertise specifically in the teaching of anthropology. Anthropology teachers should be reflective practitioners who should regard their experiments in teaching as action research. This combined with institutional and national efforts should hopefully make the teaching of anthropology in our institutions more professional,

Finally, on career pathways and professional development, during their career progression, alumni must be potentially mobile, prepared to make up opportunities in different sectors, and perform a multiplicity of roles. In order to ensure their early rather than late entry into employment where anthropology is recognized, a range of discipline-based and transferable skills training has to be provided to students. Besides, career advisers are needed to enhance employment prospects of this discipline. Lastly, the profile of the

discipline should be revised so that there will be greater public recognition of its universal applicability and relevance to the modern world.

## Conclusion

This paper has discussed anthropology, looking at its colonial origin, in order to see how it serves as gateway for colonialism. It was noted that the discipline enjoyed high prestige and respect during the colonial period, until its decline after independence, during which it functioned as gatekeeper sifting culture exchange. This paper has discussed the role of anthropology in the contemporary society and rejected the claim that it is an archaic discipline. As a result, it calls for articulate teaching and learning methods so that the discipline can be made more relevant to the contemporary industrial developing societies of Africa in the new millennium.

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## **Anthropology at the University of Yaoundé: A Historical Overview: 1962-1999**

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### **Introduction**

The teaching of anthropology at the University of Yaoundé dates back to the creation of this institution. Its status and existence today as an autonomous discipline within the Cameroon university system is the result of a long struggle. It is therefore, important to discuss the history, in order to grasp the motives and the context that favoured the reforms and changes, and which, subsequently, affected the teaching of anthropology at that university. The university has undergone a number of reforms since its creation in 1962, but the most significant changes are those of January 1993 which provide a niche for anthropology as a strategic discipline within the university system.

Anthropology began timidly at the University of Yaoundé through the teaching of basic courses on the family, marriage, kinship and other related topics from 1962 to 1980s. It gained greater importance in the 1990s as more and more teachers and students were recruited. This paper looks at the events that have shaped anthropology, at least at the University of Yaoundé, and the impact of recent reforms on other emerging universities in the country.

### **What is Anthropology?**

Anthropology, as the study of humankind, is defined and taught in a variety of ways. On continental Europe, anthropology referred more to the study of the genetically inherited characteristics of humankind while ethnology, as the study of contemporary cultures, was given more prominence. In the Americas, anthropology includes physical and cultural anthropology. While physical anthropology focuses on the genetically inherited characteristics of man (palaeontology, comparative human biology, comparative primatology, etc.), cultural anthropology looks at the socially learned behaviour of humankind (ethnology, archaeology, linguistics).

What is taught at the University of Yaoundé 1 is cultural anthropology which tends to follow the American traditions of the four fields. This trend

dates back to late 1970s when Paul Nchoji Nkwi was recruited as an assistant professor. Before then, ethnology was being taught, given that the founding fathers of Cameroon anthropology were trained in France. The fundamental change in the late 1970s was largely determined by the huge amount of literature coming out of the American tradition. For the past two decades, culture as a fundamental concept has been at the basis of anthropology. Even though Tylor and Malinowski (quoted in Richards, 1976: 16) looked at culture as the sum total of ideas and behaviour shared by a group, Good enough (1970) approaches culture from a cognitive perspective and defines it as the sum total of representations, ideas and symbols shared by members of a society. The word “anthropology”, used in this paper, refers to cultural anthropology.

### **The Creation and the Evolution of the University of Yaoundé**

By a presidential decree of July 1962 (no. 62-DF-28), the Federal University of Cameroon was created which would later become the University of Yaoundé in 1972. The creation of this University put an end to the long and fierce debate on the need for such an institution. In the 1950s, the UN Trusteeship Council had proposed the creation of an institution of higher learning in Cameroon. When the recommendation was submitted to the Conference of Directors of Education in Black Africa, they rejected the idea as “utopic”. If such an institution had to be created it must meet the university of metropolitan standards and quality.

The conference instead proposed a university college which would train African middle-level manpower without “metropolitan grades” (Marchand, 1962). France, the administrator of part of the Trusteeship territory of Cameroon, was by that fact required to submit every year a report on the social, economic and political situation in the trusteeship territory. Even though the United Nations was pushing for a university, France considered the number of candidates for Bachelor Degree holders insufficient to justify the creation of a university. Instead, France promised to increase the number of higher education scholarships for studies abroad (cf. Bulletin de L'inspection Generale de l'Enseignement et de la Jeunesse, Ministere de la France d'outre-mer, Juillet 1950, p.15). France also believed that the crucial problem was the training of local administrative officers. Officers trained in foreign universities in Europe were not at all adapted to the needs, if not, to the specific realities of the colony.

Furthermore, most Cameroonians trained abroad did not return. In addition, the number of officers needed was far higher than those trained in



foreign institutions. They could not satisfy the long term needs, given the limited scholarships and the up-keep of these students constituted a heavy financial burden on both bilateral and international aid. The necessity to train more local senior officers adapted to the needs of the country, and to fight against brain drain, called for the creation of a number of institutions of higher learning in the colonies. For Cameroon the attempt to develop such institutions led finally to the creation of The National Institute for University Studies in Cameroon (Decree DC/61-55 of April 25, 1961). The Institute, funded mostly by France, provided two years of university studies in Law (“capacite”) to holders of at least the Baccalaureat or Education. This was controlled by the University of Toulouse. With the assistance of France, steps were taken to provide the teaching staff and the necessary funds for the creation and administration of the University.

For the Federal University of Cameroon to become functional, the French Foundation for Higher Education in Cameroon was established to run the various institutions. In 1962, the new university comprised the following institutions: the Higher Teachers’ Training School (ENS) sponsored by UNESCO, the Faculty of Law and Economic Sciences, the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences and the Federal School of Agriculture supported by FAO. The Faculty of Sciences was established a year later in 1963. Six years later, two other institutions were created: the Centre for the Management of Enterprise and the University Centre for Health Sciences (CUSS).

Created as a National Institute for University Studies in 1961, the Federal University which later on became the University of Yaoundé (1970-1971) has witnessed a remarkable demographic and infrastructural development. The different university institutions operated in different parts of the city. By the beginning of the academic year 1967/68, all the faculties moved into their own campuses constructed in Ngoa-Ekelle. France’s financial and material support was critical for the development of the university, thanks to a special agreement between Cameroon and France, giving France complete control of higher education for a period of 10 years. The teaching staff was recruited under this special agreement and most of the staff were French nationals or Cameroonians paid by the French. In 1972, a presidential decree nationalized the university and France was forced to withdraw its hold on the system. Some Cameroonian staff, previously paid by France refused local salaries and went on strike. When a new decree signed in October 1976 increased substantially the salaries of lecturers, slowed down brain drain and enhanced the teaching profession.

But because of the growing numbers, problems of infrastructure, professionalization, and in keeping with the policy of regional balance Decree

n° 77/108 of April 28, 1977 raised the existing university institutions into four new university centres, namely:

- Douala, the University Centre for Sciences and Business;
- Buea, University Centre for Languages and Letters;
- Dschang, University Centre for Agronomic Sciences;
- Ngaoundere, University Centre for Science and Technology.

However, the creation of these Centres was designed to slow down the exponential growth of the student population at the University of Yaoundé, but this objective was never attained because of the over-specialization of the Centres which limited the numbers of students admitted to each centre.

The Federal University had a student population of 3,334 in 1972 when Cameroon took it over from the French. The numbers continued to grow without the expansion of infrastructure (see table I).

**Table 1: Admission from 1962-1992 at the University of Yaoundé**

| Year      | No. of students | Percentage growth |
|-----------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1961/1962 | 213             |                   |
| 1971/1972 | 3334            | 29%               |
| 1981/1982 | 15800           | 8%                |
| 1991/1992 | 51000           | 12%               |

Despite the creation of professional university centres, the number of students at the campus of the University of Yaoundé continued to swell while these university centres remained empty. The state was obliged to create six universities by decree no. 93/026 of January 19, 1993. We will come back to these reforms later on, for they had a great impact on the status and teaching of anthropology in the new universities.

It must be stated clearly that the state was reluctant to give full expression to Anglo-Saxon culture. Although English and French were the official languages of the university, very few French-speaking teachers bothered to polish up their English. The converse was not true with English-speaking staff. English-speaking students found it difficult to express themselves in French, as French constituted an additional burden on them when they took to the street to demand an Anglo-Saxon university, it was readily granted when the Prime Minister, went on Radio and Television, and told the students such a university would be created. It is against this background that the University of Yaoundé split up into two and four other

universities were created (Dschang, Ngaoundere, Buea, Yaoundé 1, Douala and Yaoundé 2).

### **The Status of Anthropology before the 1993 Reform**

Right from the creation of the university some anthropology courses were taught in the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences. The decree creating the Federal University in 1962 stipulates in article 11 that the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences would award Bachelor Degrees in Letters to students who had successfully passed the examinations composed of the “five certificates of higher Education” that made up the Bachelor’s degree. The faculty awarded the following first degrees:

- 1- Classical Letters;
- 2- Modern Letters;
- 3- History and Geography;
- 4- Human Sciences (Philosophy);
- 5- Human Sciences (Sociology);
- 6- Human Sciences (Psychology).

In order to be awarded a degree in Sociology, a student was required to have obtained the Certificate of Ethnology. The degree in Human Sciences (Sociology) was composed of the following certificates:

- 1- Certificate of History of Civilization;
- 2- Certificate in General Sociology;
- 3- Certificate in General Psychology;
- 4- Certificate in Ethnology;
- 5- Certificate in Political and Social Economy.

Designed along the lines of the French university system, Ethnology was taught as a sub-discipline of social sciences. All students taking sociology were obliged to take courses in ethnology. Although a separate department or degree in anthropology did not exist, studying ethnology was a vital component of the degree in Human Sciences (Sociology). From the beginning, there were conscious efforts to bring anthropology on board right in the early years of the Federal University of Yaoundé.

This teaching program contained the following courses:

#### **History and Methodology**

- The major theories in sociology (ethnology);

- Definition of Sociology and Social Sciences;
- Sociology and psychoanalysis;
- Sociological Research; methods & techniques of research on the field;
- Ethnology and Sociology, signification of archaism.

### **Sociological Problems**

- The levels of interpretation of social phenomena;
- Typology of groups; social morphology;
- Sociology of language;
- The types of family organizations;
- Social control and political sociology.

### **Subjects for Option**

- Economic Sociology and Sociology of work;
- African Ethnology.

The reforms of the 1980s merged the three degrees in human sciences into what came to be known as degree in Philosophy. The reforms proposed the removal of sociology and anthropology entirely from the teaching program. After a fight by both sociologists and anthropologists, it was agreed that sociology and anthropology would constitute one single unit with philosophy. Indeed, these reforms permitted students to take common courses in both philosophy and sociology during the first two years. It is in the third year that they specialized in sociology, graduating with a combined degree in philosophy/sociology. The courses offered in ethnology were reduced considerably to a single course entitled: The sociology of traditional Africa. Students interested in anthropology could only take courses in the third year with the possibility of studying anthropology at the graduate level (fourth-fifth years).

Here is a sample of the common courses in philosophy-sociology:

### **First Year**

- Social Science History;
- Methods of research in social sciences;
- Initiation into anthropology;
- Introduction to statistics.

### **Second Year**

- Social Sciences History;
- Methods of research in social sciences;
- Social psychology;

- Statistics;
- Anthropology of the family;
- Sociology of development.

### **Third Year**

#### **Common Courses:**

- Sociology of deviance;
- Sociology of work;
- Demography;
- Methods of research in social sciences;
- People and cultures of Cameroon;
- People and cultures of the world;
- Methods of analysis and interpretation of sociological texts;
- General Anthropology.

### **Social Structures**

- Women and Development;
- Urban Anthropology;
- Applied Anthropology;
- Anthropology of development;
- Religious anthropology.

### **Sociology Option**

- Sociology of Development;
- Urban Sociology;
- Political Sociology;
- Sociology of education;
- Sociology of population.

Although students graduating with degrees in Philosophy-Sociology had basic notions about anthropology, it is interesting to note that the staff was predominantly made up of anthropologists.

### **Profile of Staff of the Department of Sociology**

Although anthropology was not taught in all its various forms and given the prominence it deserved, the presence of the discipline was visible in the people who taught and administered the department of sociology. When the department was established in the 1960s, it was a French anthropologist who headed it and for next 12 years, the department would remain in the hands of

anthropologists. By 1986, there were 12 members of staff in the department of Sociology of which 7 were anthropologists. By 1993, when the discipline was given a full autonomous status of granting degrees (B.Sc., Master, PhD), there were 12 anthropologists on the teaching staff.

At no time were there more sociologists than anthropologists in the department. Throughout the 1980s, there were 12 members of staff, 7(52%) were anthropologists while 5(48%) were sociologists. Furthermore, some anthropologists prefer to be labelled sociologists. Historically, anthropology in France and the rest of Europe meant physical anthropology, while social and cultural anthropology was seen as part of sociology or ethnology. The role played by anthropology during the colonial period created a difficult climate for the discipline. Having served as a handmaiden of colonialism, anthropology was seen and described by African intellectuals, academics and nationalists as a colonial discipline that had nothing to do with the new emerging and modernizing Africa. Even though great names like Busia and Kenyatta became political leaders in their countries, they did not enhance the discipline as a strategic subject for Africa's development. Consequently, many Africans who studied anthropology or ethnology in North American and European universities, returned to a university system that was hostile to the discipline. Carrying the label sociologist was more acceptable and marketable than the label anthropologist. Many who studied anthropology did so within the context of cultural renaissance, carving a niche for Africa within world history. The struggles of Cheikh Anta Diop and other African scholars to restore the dignity of African cultures became a great inspiration to those who went on to study anthropology despite the hostility.

In 1986, most members of staff were trained abroad. Only two had been trained entirely trained in Cameroon. The rest of the teachers were trained in the USA, France, Switzerland, Germany and Belgium. The teachers came from a variety of professional backgrounds and experiences. This was a great asset to the department. Again they came back to a university system with little incentives for research and teaching. The lack of these resources played negatively on their careers. Their professional careers seemed to stagnate once they become senior lecturers. For the entire history of the department, no sociologist has ever risen to the rank of full professor. The promotion system which requires quality publications and professional performance has made it possible for most teachers to vegetate as senior lecturers. This makes it very difficult to train of students at the graduate level. Another reason why promotion became an impossibility, was the requirement of a Doctorat d'état for Francophone members of staff to qualify for higher promotion. As a terminal degree, teachers with only degrees of Doctorat de 3<sup>e</sup> cycle were

required to obtain the Doctorat d'état before they could seek promotion to the grade of associate professor. Teachers who studied in the German system were also required to obtain habilitation before applying for promotion while those with Ph.Ds. from the USA and Great Britain could evolve professionally without further restrictions provided they fulfilled the requirements of publications.

Although, the teachers of anthropology came from a variety of university backgrounds, yet the teaching of anthropology at the University of Yaoundé was strongly based on the American anthropology tradition. However, archaeology and linguistics are taught in separate departments. What is called anthropology at the University of Yaoundé 1 is basically cultural anthropology with a strong focus on the applied dimensions. This applied dimension emerged during the new reforms of 1993.

### **The Teaching of Anthropology and 1993 University Reforms**

The 1993 reforms were preceded by a debate within the Ministry of Higher Education about the professionalization of the entire teaching program at the lone University of Yaoundé. The need to provide students with professional skills and experience was being proposed to solve the unemployment crisis. Each discipline was asked to reflect on the possibility of reforming the university system with increased emphasis on capacity building and skills acquisitions.

The growing number of students was posing a serious infrastructural problem.

The infrastructure built in the late 1960s was meant to house 10,000 students. There were over 50,000 students during the 1991/92 academic year. In order to deal with these numbers, five new universities were created out of the University of Yaoundé: Yaoundé 11 (Soa), Douala, Dschang, Ngaoundere and Buea. The old University of Yaoundé became University of Yaoundé 1.

In the old university system, admissions were limited to students below 25 years of age. But with the reform, all qualified Cameroonians wishing to pursue university education could register in these institutions as stipulated by article 2 of decree no. 93/027 of January 1993. These guidelines offered a unique occasion for anthropology to redefine its vision and mission within the new university reforms.

Although some courses in anthropology were being taught in the department of sociology, the department was not known as the department of sociology and anthropology. With the reforms, a department of sociology and anthropology was established granting anthropology the status of a first degree



awarding discipline. Before the reforms, students could only obtain masters and doctorate degrees in anthropology but not first degrees. The 1993 reforms introduced a first degree (B.A) program and made admissions into the master's degree fairly flexible and liberal. All students with first degree were allowed to enrol directly in a master degree program without any prior selection. This measure was designed to keep the students for another year on the bench. Only the Ph.D. program imposed a number of conditions. It was selective.

Inspired by government's desire to professionalize the disciplines, the new courses in anthropology were redesigned to permit students to acquire basic notions of applicability and practice. Table 2 shows the different courses, designed, debated by teachers of anthropology and approved by the university senate and council.

**Table 2: Courses in Anthropology after the Reforms of 1993**

| <b>CODE LEVEL</b> | <b>COURSE TITLE</b>                           |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| UV 111            | Introduction to General Anthropology          |
| UV112             | History of Anthropology                       |
| UV113             | Social Structure and Organisation             |
| UV114             | Material Culture: Technology Technology       |
| UV115             | Introduction to Ethnographic Research:        |
| UV 116            | Introduction to Ethno linguistics             |
| UV 117            | Concept of Culture and Civilisation           |
| UV 118            | Introduction to Systems of Belief             |
| UV 119            | Bilingual Training                            |
| UV 120            | Introduction to Cultural Anthropology         |
| UV 121            | The Anthropology of African Family            |
| UV 122            | The Anthropology of the Supernatural          |
| <b>CODE Level</b> | <b>COURSE TITLE</b>                           |
| UV211             | Current Theories in Anthropology              |
| UV212             | introduction to Physical Anthropology         |
| UV 213            | Culture and Personality                       |
| UV 214            | Cultural Dynamics                             |
| UV 215            | Peoples and Cultures of Cameroon Cameroon     |
| UV216             | Political and legal Anthropology Anthropology |
| UV 217            | Bilingual Training                            |
| UV 221            | Systemic Analysis ( Marriage and Family)      |
| UV222             | Medical and Nutritional Anthropology          |
| UV223             | Urban Anthropology                            |
| UV224             | Anthropology of Development                   |

| <b>CODE LEVEL</b> | <b>COURSE TITLE</b>                                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| UV 311            | Fieldwork Techniques and Methods (Quantitative and Qualitative) |
| UV 312            | Material Culture (Economic)                                     |
| UV 313            | Peoples and Cultures of Africa                                  |
| UV 314            | Peoples and Cultures of The World                               |
| UV 315            | Linguistic Anthropology                                         |
| UV316             | Anthropology of Religion                                        |
| UV317             | Bilingual Training                                              |
| UV321             | Systemic Analysis                                               |
| UV322             | Medical Anthropology                                            |
| UV323             | Anthropology of Development Development                         |
| UV324             | Urban Anthropology                                              |
| <b>CODE LEVEL</b> | <b>COURSE TITLE</b>                                             |
| UV 4111           | Advanced Training in Research Methods                           |
| UV 4112           | Fieldwork and Computer Applications                             |
| UV 4113           | Seminar                                                         |
| UV4211            | Political and Legal Anthropology                                |
| UV 4212           | Family and Kinship Systems                                      |
| UV 4213           | Social Organization and Social inequalities                     |
| UV 4214           | Anthropology of Religion                                        |
| UV 4311           | Population Issues and Reproductive Health                       |
| UV 4312           | International Health and Anthropology                           |
| UV 4313           | Cultural Perceptions of Illness and Disease                     |
| UV 4314           | Social Science and Health                                       |
| UV 4411           | Urban Anthropology: Theory And Praxis                           |
| UV 4412           | Community Development and Sustainability                        |
| UV 4413           | Environmental Anthropology: Social Impact Assessment            |
| UV 4414           | Taxonomies & Systems of Semantic Relationships                  |
| <b>CODE LEVEL</b> | <b>COURSE TITLE</b>                                             |
| UV 5111           | Advanced Training In Research Methods                           |
| UV5112            | Fieldwork and Computer Applications                             |
| UV5113            | Seminar                                                         |
| UV 5211           | Social Organization and Differentiation                         |
| UV 5212           | The African Family in Transition                                |
| UV 5213           | Social Transformation of Kinship Structures                     |
| UV 5214           | Traditional Authority in Transition                             |
| UV5311            | Primary Health Dialectics: Programs and Evaluation              |
| UV 5312           | Reproductive Health & New Approaches to Population Issues       |
| UV 5313           | Public Health Policies and Praxis                               |
| UV 5314           | Alternative Medicine: Traditional Healing Practices             |

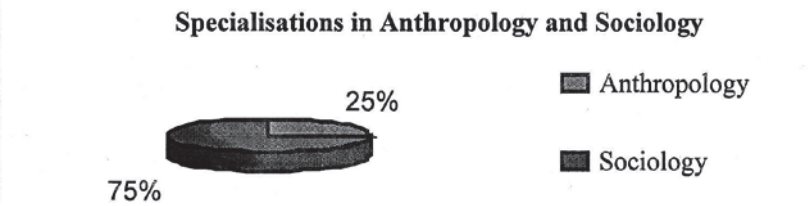
In the late 1970s and 1980s, there was an age limit to admissions. All persons above the age of 25 were no more eligible. This measure was directed against civil servants who pursue degree courses while working. With the economic crisis and increased unemployment, the 1993 university reforms opened the doors of the university to all persons qualified, irrespective of age. A new category of students called student-workers emerged and has progressively increased since 1993. Statistics obtained from the admission office show that between 1993/94 and 1998/99, a total of 223 students have been enrolled in anthropology courses and 79 (35%) of them are workers.

### Graduates in anthropology and the University of Yaoundé 1

Before the university reforms, specialization in anthropology began at the level of the Master’s degree program. On the whole, after the Master’s degree, several students went abroad to continue their studies. Few students went on to the Ph.D. program at Yaoundé. The anthropology staff actively encouraged students to seek higher degrees abroad where conditions for research and studies were better. Library resources and research opportunities hardly existed at Yaoundé. Encouraging students to study aboard was designed to create greater exposure and prepare them for a more active professional life. As a consequence, since the university reforms of 1993, no student has defended a doctorate dissertation. Several bachelor and master’s degrees in anthropology have been awarded. Table 3 is a synthesis of areas of specialization in anthropology and sociology.

**Table 4: Number of Students in the Different Specialization**

| Specialization | Number by specialization | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Anthropology   | 52                       | 25             |
| Sociology      | 159                      | 75             |
| Total          | 211                      | 100            |

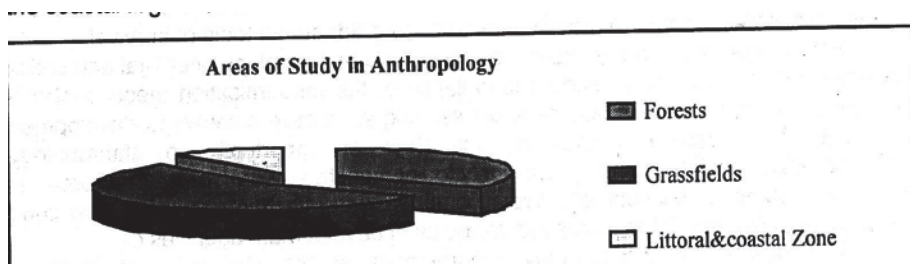


**Graph 1: Ratio of specializations in Anthropology and Sociology**

The theses and dissertations have covered a wide range of themes and specialization, and the emerging trend is that students are turning more to applied areas. This is largely due to the nature of the teaching program which places emphasis on the acquisition of applied skills and experience.

However, cultural and social Anthropology constitute privileged domains of research. Out of 52 anthropological dissertations presented at the university of Yaoundé 1 over the last 25 years, 14 (28%) handle issues in the domain of cultural anthropology whereas 10 (20%) deal with issues in social anthropology. 10 of the 52 dissertations were in medical anthropology, 6 in Ethno linguistics, 4 in political anthropology and religion and the rest in archaeology, anthropology of development, Environmental Anthropology and economic anthropology.

The dissertations can be regrouped into three main geographical areas: forest zone, Grassfields and littoral/coastal regions. The Grassfields of Cameroon emerge as the dominant ethnographic field for most students. 27 of the 52 dissertations cover the Grassfields, 17 cover the forest zone, while 5 address anthropological issues in the coastal region.



**Graph 2: Areas of Study in Anthropology**

## **Anthropology and Future Perspectives**

In the beginning, the creation of universities was designed to deal with the shortage of qualified manpower for administration in the newly independent nation states. For example, a country in Central Africa had only sixteen university graduates at the time of independence and twelve of these were priests. Between 1960 and 1970, university graduates easily found employment in the civil service. Even those who obtained degrees in anthropology were easily employed in the various ministries. Unemployment of graduates was not a problem given that professional schools such the National School of Public Administration (ENAM) recruited its students largely from secondary schools with GCE O & A levels rather from the university system. It was only the

School of Magistracy that only law degree holders were eligible to as candidates.

By the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, public administration was saturated with a critical mass of university graduates, and the civil service could only absorb graduates selectively through a competitive process. Those who could not make it floated in the labour markets. By 1986, the labour market was saturated with graduates without employment. When President Biya signed a decree authorizing the Public service to recruit 1,500 university graduates, this action instead provided employment in the public service without a substantive work load. The Structural Adjustment Program of the 1980s placed several restrictions on recruitments by asking the state to reduce its personnel in the public service to the bare minimum.

The university reforms of the early 1980s were aimed at producing graduates with skills capable of generating self-employment. The faculty of Letters and Human Sciences of the University of Yaoundé, trained graduates whose only job market was the Ministry of National Education which recruited teachers at primary and secondary school levels. The reforms regrouped sister-disciplines with the aim of providing broad-based education in order to enhance their performance as teachers. This regrouping of human sciences produced in the human sciences two major combined degrees: History-Geography and Philosophy-Sociology. A few courses in anthropology were taught in the new combined degree of Philosophy-Sociology. Philosophies, being a teaching subject in secondary schools, students with a combined degree in philosophy-sociology were therefore trained to teach basic courses in philosophy. Indeed students who graduated with a combined degree in philosophy sociology and went on to pursue higher studies in anthropology ended up as secondary schools teachers.

Even these reforms of the early 1980s only provided an ephemeral solution to the growing problem of unemployment. The teaching profession also became saturated. By the end of the 1980s, the state began to think about how to design the teaching programs to produce graduates with self-employment skills. Efforts at professionalization sought to provide vital skills to graduate as tools of survival.

For anthropology, the question was how could anthropology offer vital and critical survival skills to students. Already, the collapse of the modernization theory in 1960s had generated a whole new debate about seeking alternative answers to development questions. This debate opened a new door of opportunity to anthropology. Anthropological insights and micro-analytic perspective were being explored as alternative routes to

development. Would anthropology offer the answers? How could anthropology respond to the increased demands of development agencies?

The design of anthropology programs at the University of Yaoundé attempted to address these concerns by redesigning teaching programs. The classical training in anthropology was bound to be reviewed in the light of new demands, that is, training students with vital survival skills. The university, a world of ideas and idealism, was bound to remain alert to the demands of the world of actions policy and practices. While our colleagues in North America and Europe are asserting that applied anthropology is not anthropology, those of us who teach and react with the world of action believe that anthropology can only be meaningful and useful, if it listens to the daily problems developers face in bringing induced change to communities. Academic anthropology is inextricably linked to development anthropology. Furthermore, for anthropology to rehabilitate the colonial image in Africa, it must use its insights to address myriads of problems facing the social transformation of the continent.

Experience has shown that more and more anthropologists are being called upon by international Organizations and NGOs to assist them bring induced Change to many rural communities. In Cameroon international NGOs and intergovernmental agencies such as GTZ, OED, IUCN, SNV, AFVP, APFT, CARE, UNESCO, UNICEF, and many others use the services and expertise of anthropologists. The challenge to those training students of culture is to prepare them for a world that is seeking alternatives to development practice, and anthropology should be able to offer some alternatives.

The anthropology program at the University of Yaoundé focuses on applied issues right from the first year. While theoretical training is considered important, the practical training is aimed at providing the professional skills which will transform students into culture-brokers for developers and consultants for organizations that will need their expertise. The training is tailored to the demands of the users: government, national and international organizations. The applied areas include medical and health issues, development issues, systemic analysis, urban development and problems related environment.

## **Conclusion: Which Way Forward?**

The future of anthropology in the decades ahead will depend on how anthropology meets the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One of the major challenges is meeting the needs and demands of a fast changing world. The

rehabilitation of its image is well on the way to full recovery, but the integration of anthropological insights into the development process of African nations must become a permanent and not just an ephemeral feature. The 1990s opened a window of opportunity and only good research and training can maintain the stakes open. While action-research is critically important for policy-makers, the work of applied anthropologists must feed into the teaching programs within the academy.

If anthropology in Yaoundé has witnessed a significant increase in students, this has been largely due to the dream that anthropology as an applied discipline can offer them employment in the private and public sectors that are increasingly looking to anthropologists for solutions. The greatest service that can be rendered is the orientation of teaching programs to meet the needs and demands of the world of employment.

Indeed, anthropology can only gain respectability among the social sciences if its performance as an applied discipline meets the standards. Such an achievement will depend on a commitment to solid training in theory and practice. The survival of anthropology will also depend on its capacity to transcend the micro-analytic approach to a more interdisciplinary and trans disciplinary comprehension and adaptation. The more students are trained in comparative multi-disciplinary methodology, the more will they be armed to work with others whose knowledge and comprehension of anthropological insights is either limited or prejudiced. Anthropologists must learn to work in multidisciplinary teams for today and tomorrow's development problems is no more an affair of one discipline, but the concern of all. It is only in doing so that the discipline can assert its position as a strategic discipline within the development equation.

The case of anthropology at the University of Yaoundé 1, serves as a model for the rest of Africa. There is an increasing number of people from other disciplines taking anthropology as a degree subject. Over the last five years, the university has admitted matured students who are secondary school teachers, journalists, nurses, and civil administrators. The training of this new crop of students will certainly develop a new advocacy and marketing of the discipline beyond its frontiers. As our students are getting into some liberal professions such as army, police, private entrepreneurship, there is hope that this will create a niche for the discipline in the future.

The employment of our students by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to perform a variety of duties opens another window of opportunity for the discipline. As NGOs are increasingly involved in grassroots development activities, the more they will continue to need anthropological insights. If the training is adapted to the applied needs of development



organizations, the more will the academy enhance its role and place within the development equation. It has been said that the lost decades of Africa's development have been due to the neglect of the micro-analytic approach. It is our hope that anthropology will provide the much needed insights that will make a difference.

In the age of globalization, Africa is faced with the dilemma of dealing with cultural invasion and the revival of African cultural values. Many nation-states will have to deal ultimately with the difficulties of straddling between the African and foreign cultures, borrowing what is essential and retaining what is beneficial. Africa's renaissance will depend on Africa's capacity to deal with the invasive cultures whose technological advantage will minimize Africa's values and norms. If African nations are to preserve cultural values and norms now and in the future, they must invest in strengthening and professionalizing anthropology departments. The recent reforms in Cameroon which have permitted anthropology to develop into a full-fledged discipline are commendable.

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## 2- Decrees

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- Decree no. 69/df/504 of 21/11/69 *modifying decree no. 67/df/566 of 28/12/67 putting an end to the transitional period of the creating of the Federal University of Cameroon.*
- Decree no. 69/df/380 of 17/09/69 *organizing the second cycle of the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences of the Federal University of Cameroon.*
- Decree no. 71/284 of 15/6/71 *creating the Africanist Research Centre(CRA) within the Federal University.*
- Decree no. 79/186 of 17/5/79 *fixing the amount and means of payment of University fees.* Decree no. 82/83 of 19/2/82 *fixing the roles of organization, the functioning and the control of students associations in the Faculty of big schools.*

## 3- Appendices

### 1- List of Academic Works done in the Anthropology Section of the University of Yaoundé

Cultural Anthropology: 14 thesis and dissertations

- 1- Essono Aloo, E., 1975, *Une Institution socioculturelle chez les Ntumu l'Aba*, BU, Mémoire de DES, U.Y.
- 2- Tchoupo, P., 1975, *Education traditionnelle chez les Bamileke a partir de quelques contes*, B.U, Mémoire de DES, UY.
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  - 8- Kegne Jean, 1978, *Contribution a t'étude du fondement du dynamisme Bamileke (étude anthropologique)*, mémoire de DES, UY.
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  - 11- Mbonji, 1983, *Les jeux et leurs fonctions sociales en Afrique Noire. L'exemple des jeux Douala*, thèse de doctorat 3<sup>e</sup> cycle, UY
  - 12- Nouck, Bassomb, 1984, *Le mythe de la restauration chez les Bassa du Sud-Cameroun*, mémoire de maitrise, UY
  - 13- Abega, S.C., 1984, *L'Esana des Beti du Sud-Cameroun*, thèse de doctorat 3<sup>e</sup> cycle, UY
  - 14- Tchouyou, P., 1986, *Les fondements socio-culturels des associations d'étudiants originaires d'une même région au Cameroun*, mémoire de maitrise, UY
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  - 2- Tiokou Ndonko, F., 1987, *Représentations culturelles de l'épilepsie chez les Bamileke: Le cas de Maham*, mémoire de maitrise, UY
  - 3- Socpa, A., 1995, *Les pharmacies de rue dans l'espace médical urbain au Cameroun. Emergence et déterminants des stratégies informelles d'accès au médicamentsa Douala*, thèse de 3<sup>e</sup> cycle, UY1
  - 4- Messina, C.B., 1999, *représentations socio-culturelles du goitre chez les Maka: le cas de Bend*, mémoire de maitrise, UY1
  - 5- Ngambouck, Y., 1999, *The Growth of urban traditional medicine: A case study of street pharmacy vendors in Yaoundé*, memoire de maitrise , UY.
  - 6- Tatah, P., 1997, *The future of medicinal plants*, memoire de maitrise UY1.
  - 7- Angu. K., 1997, *The consumption of palm oil and vitamin A deficiency disorders among the Mokunda people, South-West province of Cameroon*, Memoire de maîtres, UY1.
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- 6- Nshom Sama, C., 1981, *Contribution of anthropology to development. A case study of the Bamendjin clan and its socio-cultural impact on Bambalang*, mémoire de maîtrise, UY
- 7- Onguene Mgba, P., 1981, *Anthropologie sociale et développement rural au Cameroun*, mémoire de maîtrise, UY
- 8- Miaffo, D., 1984, *Mutation du travail et ses représentations chez les Bulu du Sud-Cameroun*, Thèse de 3<sup>e</sup> cycle UY
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- 1- Fontem Shu, J., 1975, *Religious conflict in Bafut*, memoirs de DES, UY
- 2- Soh Bejeng P., 1975, *A study of Lela, a Bali-Tchamba state cult of the North-West Grassfields of Cameroon*, B.U, memoire de DES, UY

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- 1- Akwa, Neba, G., 1999, *Gestion traditionnelle de la toret chez les Baka, Bagando*. Memoire de maîtres, UY1.

## II Condensed table of specializations in Anthropology

| Specialization           | Number by specialization | Total Number | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Cultural Anthropology    | 14                       | 52           | 27             |
| Political Anthropology   | 4                        | 52           | 8              |
| Anthropology of religion | 2                        | 52           | 4              |
| Ethno linguistics        | 6                        | 52           | 12             |
| Archeology               | 1                        | 52           | 2              |
| Social Anthropology      | 11                       | 52           | 21             |
| Anthropology of          | 2                        | 52           | 4              |
| Environmental            | 1                        | 52           | 2              |
| Economical Anthropology  | 2                        | 52           | 4              |
| Medical Anthropology     | 10                       | 52           | 19             |

### **III. List of acronyms**

AFVP: Association Française des Volontaires de Progrès  
APFT: Association des Peuples de la Forêt Tropicale  
CUSS: Centre Universitaire des Sciences de la Santé  
DED: Service Allemand de développement  
ENAM: Ecole Nationale d'Administration et de Magistrature  
ENS: Ecole Normale Supérieure  
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization  
GCE E LEVEL: General Certificate Elementary level  
GCE O LEVEL: General Certificate Ordinary level  
GTZ: Cooperation Technique Allemande  
IUCN: International Union for the Conservation of Nature  
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization  
SNV: Organisme Néerlandais de Développement  
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural  
Organization  
UNICEF: United Nations' Children Fund

## **From Research to Intervention: The Input of Anthropology in Sexual Health and AIDS Prevention Program for Ethiopian Immigrant Adolescents in Israel**

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### **Introduction**

This paper will try to convey my professional experience in a culturally significant program on sexual health education for adolescent Ethiopian immigrants, one of the various educational projects that I have been involved in throughout the past fifteen years in the context of my work as an applied and medical anthropologist.

Israel is a State of immigration in which Jews from different countries of origin have come together, amongst them approximately 70,000 from Ethiopia, most of whom arrived as from 1980. After more than two thousand years, their dream “to return to Jerusalem” came true. But they were not prepared for the new reality they encountered. The transition from traditional rural society in Ethiopia to a Western oriented urban one in Israel has left its imprint in all life spheres, including family structure, gender roles and relations with members of the opposite sex before marriage. Some of these issues are universal and are shared by immigrants and refugees that have passed from rural to urban settings and have been studied in Africa (Barker 1992) as well as in European countries (Gopalk 1989). Other aspects are unique to this particular case: the immigration of Jews from sub-Saharan Africa to Israel. This paper centres on Ethiopian immigrant adolescents studying in youth villages (residential schools often located in rural settings) associated with Youth Aliyah, an organization that for more than sixty years has dealt with the absorption, education and advancement of youth from different ethnic groups (Gottesman 1988). In 1996, the organization was incorporated into the Department of Rural Education and youth Aliyah of the Ministry of Education of Israel. Since 1980, thousands of Ethiopian immigrant adolescents have entered youth villages, some of them only hours after their arrival from refugee camps in Sudan. Although their counsellors and teachers received them with warmth and love, cross-cultural misunderstandings arose,



often leading to a mutual sense of frustration. Ethiopian immigrant adolescents represented a challenge for the professional staff working with them because of their unique background and culture. Applied anthropological research and intervention was seen as a means to decode misunderstandings, solve practical problems and serve as a basis for the development of culturally significant educational programs (Nudelman 1993).

## **Sexual Health and AIDS Prevention**

### **Research**

The need for sexual health education arose from the field a few months after “Operation Moses”, the first wave of mass immigration in 1984-85 (Parfitt 1985), when hundreds of Ethiopian immigrants were absorbed into youth villages and again after the second wave in 1990-91. This led to the employment of an anthropologist and to the first “quick and dirty” applied research, which later developed into an on-going study. The main research tools used were focus groups (Morgan 1989, Trotter 1991) which proved ideal for applied anthropological research of adolescent health in general (Spruijt Metz 1995) and of sexual health and Aids in particular (Chigier and Nudelman 1994, Palmer et al, 1996). Single-sex focus groups with adolescents aged 14 to 18 were conducted in youth villages. These groups met regularly over extended time periods, resulting in a longitudinal study on changing boy/girl relationships as well as on health-related issues in general. The focus groups were complemented by ethnographic interviews (Spradley 1979) with young immigrants, their parents and elders in the community and by participant observation in the youth villages and in Ethiopian immigrants’ gatherings and events. The research assistant, whose help was invaluable, was a veteran immigrant, having herself arrived from Ethiopia as an adolescent during the seventies.

The research findings showed that four different phases in the life of Ethiopian Jews must be considered in order to fully understand these adolescent immigrants behaviour in Israel:

1. In rural Ethiopian society, gender roles were clearly defined and adults made all the decisions concerning their children’s lives, including marriage arrangements at an early age. The control over the young bride passed from her father to her husband, in accordance with patriarchal family structure (Kahana 1977, Messing 1982).

2. During the immigration process, the fight for survival in difficult conditions in refugee camps in Sudan, led to the interruption of many social and cultural practices and to the adoption of others, among them “fictitious

marriages” between unprotected female adolescents and older males of the community (Bodovsky et. al. 1994). These relations usually included sexual activities. Among the remaining Jews, some of whom spent years waiting for their immigration in Addis Ababa, there was a tendency to revert back to early arranged marriages.

3. During the first period in Israel, Ethiopian adolescents tended to imitate the behaviour of their Israeli-born peers, often without understanding its meaning. Relations between members of the opposite sex were characterized by confusion, pressure upon the girls to make decisions that were previously in the hands of parents or older brothers and a feeling of lack of control, leading to unintended pregnancies and psychosocial problems.

4. After a few years, the youth have a better understanding of the cultural meaning of gender roles and relations in Israel. Nevertheless, although they tend to behave like their peers in the youth villages, their attitudes and values are often influenced by the conflicting situation of living “between two worlds”: Israel and Ethiopia, as reinforced by their families. This complex situation reflects on the adolescent immigrants’ interpersonal relations with members of the opposite sex. While mate selection is usually by free choice, serious relationships, which are eventually formalized, coexist with informal ones. Many adolescents prefer to keep their relationship secret, thus reducing their commitment, in case it should come to an end (Nudelman 1994).

It is important to note some of the dramatic changes in the lifestyle of these young immigrants. The age of marriage has risen, dating is a new concept as well as the concept of boy/girlfriends and the significance of a number of partners before marriage. In addition, the lack of communication among couples and the ambivalent attitudes and beliefs towards contraceptives have kept these from becoming more widely used (Goldman 1999)..

## **Sexual Health Education**

Based on the research results, a multidisciplinary team composed of the Director of Youth Aliyah’s Medical Services, a health educator, two Ethiopian immigrant advisors and the applied medical anthropologist, developed a specific Sexual Health Education Program for this target group using a cross-cultural approach. It is composed of educational units dealing with the biological, social and behavioural aspects of sexual health and combines knowledge and skill-development with meaningful concepts from the immigrant’s own cultural background. The program is essentially interactive,

using techniques such as story-telling, games and roleplaying (Chigier and Nudelman 1994).

A series of folk stories were developed for this program based on the indirect approach inherent in traditional Ethiopian culture. They are illustrated on slides and deal with the issue of internal locus of control and decision-making among female adolescents. The “Locked Door” is a story based on real accounts collected during the field work and it tells of a girl who goes to visit relatives, but finds that they are not at home. She is tired from a long trip, sits on her suitcase and stares at their locked door, when a young Ethiopian man appears. He identifies himself as a neighbour and invites her to rest and to have a cold drink at his house. Once there, he begins putting his hands all over her and eventually takes her to bed.

After discussing each slide, the students are asked to role-play the story introducing whatever changes they wish. They also bring up similar situations they have heard about, analyse them with the group and learn techniques to help them strengthen their internal locus of control and decision-making skills.

The program began to be implemented in youth villages in 1986. The instructors are primary health educators, who have completed training workshops. Approximately half of them are Ethiopian immigrants, who also serve as positive role-models for the students. Some of them are university students, who participated in this program themselves when they studied in youth villages.

The program has been evaluated periodically using qualitative as well as quantitative methods and has been modified in order to meet the changing needs of the target population.

## **Aids Prevention**

AIDS is not considered a public health problem in Israel. Officially, there are just a few hundred sick people and a few thousand HIV-infected ones.

During the first wave of immigration from Ethiopia in the mid-eighties, all the population was checked for HIV/AIDS, with no positive results. But, when 14,500 Jews were flown into Israel on “Operation Solomon”, an airlift in May 1991 (Friedman 1992), after spending months and even years in the slums of Addis Ababa, a small number of them checked HIV-positive. As a result, the Ministry of Health sponsored an AIDS prevention program for the community and each infected person was referred to a medical centre for treatment and control.

In 1996, a component on AIDS Prevention was added to our Sexual Health Education Program. It is a model developed for use in schools by the

Jerusalem Aids Project (JAIP), an Israeli NGO. The program uses the “Immune System Approach” as the starting point for dealing with the complexity of issues related to AIDS. The concepts of bacteria and virus as well as the composition of the human immune system and its functions are illustrated through cartoons on coloured flipcharts. This way it is also possible to visualize how the HIV virus targets and eventually destroys the T-cell helpers, which leads to an acute deficiency in the function of the immune system, making the body vulnerable to other pathogens.

This approach has been found more acceptable by conservative parents, religious leaders and government officials in some countries, ‘Who prefer a program on AIDS which provides full, accurate information (including the sexual transmission and the use of condoms) without the common focus on sexuality found in most curricula (Schenker 1995). ‘The program has ‘been extensively used in ‘fifteen countries as different as Nepal, Philippines, Argentina, Guatemala and Germany, many of them characterized as multicultural societies (Schenker and Sabar Friedman 1996). Rwanda is now in the process of officially implementing the program.

## **Conclusion**

My unique job as an applied anthropologist in an organization dealing with immigrants has resulted in my involvement in all stages of the Sexual Health Program: from research to curricula development, training of primary health educators, follow-up in the field and evaluation. The on-going direct contacts with adolescents in youth villages and after their graduation as well as the input of our Ethiopian-born instructors contribute to ensure that the program remains appropriate and culturally significant. Its character is essentially dynamic, keeping up with the changing attitudes, behaviour and needs of a target group in constant transition and imparting them the skills necessary to cope with life in complex Israeli society.

The Aids Prevention component has added a new dimension to the program. AIDS is a disease with no cure; it implies suffering not only for the infected person but also for their family. Sometimes a person with HIV feels well and can function normally, but he may be living a social death due to rejection by others. Prevention is the only weapon to stop this pandemic. More anthropologists should become involved in Public Health ensuring that programs are culturally significant and not merely transplants from other cultures. We should also find ways to have our voices heard both at policy-making level and in the media. This is one of the many challenges facing our profession towards the new Millennium.

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## Genderisation of illnesses in Yoruba culture: implications for theory and method in Medical Anthropology

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### Abstract

*This paper examines critically the use of “ako aisan” health terminology among the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria. It is assumed that cultural definition of health terminology will be an obstacle to health communication between providers as well as users of health services. Illness in Yoruba culture is a determinant factor of social interaction. Being a social construct and culturally relative terms its explanation is genderised to show the degree of severity which is a reflection of the social structure. Like any African society, Yoruba society is hierarchal and gender-sensitive. For the Yorubas, strength is synonymous with social construction of gender. Thus, the common saying “okunrin lada”, a symbolic expression of male superiority. In this context, the individual has power to influence others to do things even against their will, in the same way, severe illnesses subject patients to unwanted conditions. To examine the terminology, a knowledge attitude, belief and practices (KABP) study was conducted on the use of immunization services among the Yoruba using the household survey, in depth interview, focus group discussion (FGDs) and non-participatory methods to obtain data. The sample size for the household survey was 500 with 40 in depth interviews and 8 FGDs conducted. The study attempted to examine why people used or did not use immunization services. The theoretical orientation of discussion is the health belief model (HBM). Data revealed that a majority of the respondents (98.2%) fully immunized their children because they considered the target diseases as dangerous and could easily cause death. Such childhood diseases are defined as “aka aisan” and therefore need to be prevented. For them, severe illness will draw the attention of relatives and neighbours for therapeutic assistance. It also serves as a form of social control in terms of mate selection and friendship. Data also suggests that diseases perceived as “aka” received prompt attention than the less severe ones. Thus, this may influence action on therapeutic choice and mortality rate. It is concluded that culture-bound conception of terminologies should be analysed and packaged as part of health education and health promotion programs. This will, thus, improve public health programs and medical training and orientation.*

## Introduction

Gender refers to socially constructed aspects of differences between men and women. Since its introduction as a social concept it has been extended to refer not only to individual identity and personality but also, the symbolic level, to cultural ideas and stereotypes of masculinity and 'femininity' (Masshall1994). Description of illness is a culture-bound syndrome. According to Hahn (1995), a syndrome is a group of conditions, generally pathological, that may be physical and/or mental signs and/or symptoms, and that is thought to constitute a discrete entity. For instance, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is defined by a complex set of signs and symptoms that have evolved with changing knowledge as well as political and economic circumstances. The specificity with which a syndrome is defined will substantially affect what can validly be said about its characteristics, regional or ethnic, the more likely it is to be a culture-bound syndrome (Hahn 1995).

Illness is cross-culturally defined differently. As a result perception of severity differs from culture to culture (Jegade 1994, 1995, 1996, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c). Since a culture-bound syndrome is a constellation of symptoms which have been categorized as dysfunctional or disease. For Cassidy (1982), it is characterized by one or more of the following:

It cannot be understood apart from its specific cultural or sub-cultural context.

The etiology summarizes and symbolizes core meanings and behavioural norms of that culture. Diagnosis relies on culture-specific technology as well as ideology. Successful treatment is accomplished only by participation in that culture.

Engendering illness is an analytical view of illness among the Yoruba which is determined by level of severity. It represents a symbolic level of diagnosis producing a cultural idea and stereotypic view of illness as regards healing and treatment at structural level. Therefore, as discrimination occurs at different levels of illness severity, so too do differences occur between male and female.

Since perception of illness severity determines attitude towards it and how urgent assistance will be provided and what types of therapy will be used, very severe illnesses attract better attention (Adetunji 1991, Orubuloye et al 1996). To distinguish between mild, moderate and severe illnesses, the Yoruba cultural group does apply the concept of 'gender' to illness diagnosis.

It is common to describe an illness as 'ako' (male gender) or 'abo' (female gender) depending on their duration and seriousness. This paper attempts to

examine critically this issue so as to be able to find out how and why diseases are so classified.

Using Parsons "Capacity Model" (Gherhardt 1990), the sick individual is unable to carry out role duties according to other's expectations in a mutual obligation relationship Gherhardt (1990). Although Parsons used this model to define illness in general, it is being used in this paper for sickness involving high level of severity. It therefore oscillates between two extremes mild and severe. This paper examines this from the Yoruba perspective.

## **The Yoruba People**

The Yoruba-speaking ethnic group numbering about 20 million, according to population projections from the 1991 census, is the single largest homogenous cultural group in Nigeria. They reside in the south-western part of the rainforest region. They are traditionally farmers who plant various food and cash crops such as yam, cocoyam, maize, vegetables, cocoa and kolanut. It has a centralized political system, with the king as the central figure and symbol of authority. The society is structurally organized in such a way that the male sex occupy a prominent position and have better recognition than female. As a result, male domination is culturally practiced. For them, male is a symbol of power and strength. This view influences every aspect of life of the people. For instance, males always occupy the position of priests who performs religious rites. Only to a limited extent do females function as priestesses, and only to less important gods. In fact, women are forbidden to participate in certain rituals because they are considered impure and do not observe secrecy like men. The issue of secrecy is viewed as synonymous with ability to withstand pressure to divulge confidential information. As a result, women are perceived as 'weaker sex'.

Although Yoruba people recognize that women may be powerful spiritually, this does not translate to domination over men. Society itself equips men with power through inheritance, right at the expense of women. Therefore, the whole issue of power and strength is socially defined. This, therefore, is translated to explain other aspects of life especially illness.

For the Yorubas illness can be very serious, incapacitating the individual. Hence, the concept of 'ako aisan' (male gender) in Yoruba perception of serious and lingering illness. 'Ako aisan' is characterized by 'duration' and 'seriousness', and one that defies easy therapeutic measure. Although they do not categorically classify illness as 'abo aisan' (female gender), by inference, mild illnesses are subsumed under the female gender due to the connotation of strength. It is not uncommon for the Yorubas to view 'ako aisan' as a destined

condition (ayanmo), hence, they usually revered ‘Ori’ (the inner head). For them, “Each human being acquires a destiny prior to birth, before crossing the threshold that separates existence in this world (aye) from the existence in the other world (orun). However, after acquiring this destiny in ‘orun’ the individual is induced to forget the contents of that destiny before crossing the threshold that transforms the individual into a corporeal being. Once in this world, the only way for an individual, who is ignorant of his or her fate, to gain knowledge of that destiny is through divination, where it is believed that the ‘witness of destiny’ (Eleri Ipin) reveals aspects of that divine plan to the inquirer through highly trained diviner” (Payne 1992).

This suggests that ‘ako aisan’ may be something one does to have power over. One of the ‘Odu Ifa’ (Divination verse) “Ika Ofun” in fact states that:

“Aikunle yan eda  
Oun I’ada ‘aye ba  
A d’aye tan, oju nkan gbogbo wa  
sugbon eda na ko see pada loyan omiran  
A fi etutu loku”.

***Meaning:***

“What was chosen kneeling down  
Is what we find on arrival in this world.

On arrival in this world, we become too impatient (too much in a hurry to achieve our potentials),

But it is impossible to go back and choose another,  
To prevent the deterioration of things is the only cause of action left.”  
(Dosumu 1949 in Morakinyo 1983).

In fact, all other things are subsumed under this, as if individual human beings have no option. Therefore, a severe illness may be interpreted as a destined condition regardless of cause, even though they believe in natural, supernatural mystical, preternatural and hereditary causes. For them, any of these conditions will not manifest itself if one’s ori resists it. Hence, they attribute immunity to the ability of ori to resist any misfortune (Ibode). ‘Ibode’ is a state of misfortune which one’s spirit mayor may easily accept depending on its spiritual strength. It may, therefore, be concluded that someone may be destined to have low spirit and therefore be susceptible to many misfortunes during his/her life time except that such a person seeks preventive measure to prevent the deterioration of things as indicated in the Ifa verse above quoted.

## Method of Study

As part of a major study (Jegede 1995) on the use of immunization in the B Health Zone of Nigeria in 1993, the Akinyele community located in the northern part of Ibadan, the capital city of Oyo State, was studied with funds from the Council for the Development of Economic and Social Research in Africa (CODES RIA) and support from the Federal Ministry of Health task force on Yellow Fever.

It has a population projection of 180,811 from the 1991 census from which 500 samples were interviewed. A two-stage sampling procedure was employed. The first was a primary random selection of administrative units enumeration areas (EAs) proportionate to the geographical spread of the study area. Twenty-five EAs were randomly selected from the list of EAs in the area. The second level was random selection of 20 households, from each EA. In any EA where there were less than 20 eligible households all the identified households were automatically surveyed. An eligible household was one with a female member child bearing ages 15 and 49 years who had given birth to, at last, a child in the last five years.

Data collection was by in-depth interview (101), focus group discussion (FGD), structured interview (SI) and non-participatory observation (NPO) methods. Six FGDs and 40 IDIs were conducted while notes were taken during observation.

Data analysis was both descriptive and inferential. While quantitative data were processed using the SPSS software. Text base Alpha package was used for the quantitative data in which responses were arranged accordingly. Apart from the frequency distribution the chi-square statistical technique was used to analyse quantitative data. All information produced single report with each method complementing one another. Unique responses from qualitative data are highlighted in italics in the text to support or refute findings from quantitative data.

## Results

### Social Characteristics of Respondents

A majority of the respondents (66.4%) were between 30 and 49 years of age and 44.6% had formal education up to primary level. More than 54.8% were Muslims with a considerable proportion 45.2% of Christians. Trading was the predominant economic activity in the area with 61.4% of the respondents engaging in it. The people have access to modern health care services, as 85.6% were living very close to at least one health facility or the

other. Awareness of modern health care was high in the area, with the largest proportion of the respondents indicating that they had heard of immunization and other health care services. They all indicated that they have access to health education as health workers do go round on the Public Address System (PAS) from time to time apart from radio and television programs on health education. Does this alter their perception of illness? This is the question to be answered in the next section.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents According to perceived Seriousness of Measles and Causes of Illness**

| Perceived / Perceived seriousness<br>Causes | Very Serious | Serious     | Mild        | Total       |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Natural                                     | 61 (38.1%)   | 91 (38.7%)  | 80 (76.2%)  | 232 (46.4%) |
| Supernatural                                | 50 (31.3%)   | 101 (42.5%) | 50 (4.8%)   | 155 (31.0%) |
| Preternatural                               | 36 (22.5%)   | 39 (16.5%)  | 10 (9.5%)   | 85 (17.0%)  |
| Hereditary                                  | 13 (8.1%)    | 5 (2.3%)    | 10 (9.5%)   | 28 (5.6%)   |
| Total                                       | 160 (32.0%)  | 235 (47.0%) | 105 (21.0%) | 500 (100%)  |

$$X^2 = 75.0, df= 6, P (>.05)$$

Data on table 1 above show that there is no significant relationship between perceived cause of illness and perceived seriousness of illness ( $P >.05$ ). This suggests that it does not matter whether an illness is viewed as serious or mild this may not be a function of how they perceive the cause. In this study, a majority (79.0%) of the respondents perceived measles as a serious illness. Only 21.0% viewed it as a mild problem. A majority of the respondents viewed the cause of measles as natural, regardless of whether they consider it as serious or not. When serious and very serious categories were combined, an equal proportion (38.0%) perceived it as naturally and supernaturally caused. What is significant is that 76.2% of those who viewed measles as a mild illness indicated that it has a natural cause.

### Discussion

Generally, Yoruba people define illness as listed above in the table. Data have shown that there is no relationship between this and perception of illness as either serious or mild. This suggests that regardless of the cause of any illness the degree of seriousness depends on the duration and response to

therapeutic measures as they indicated that “illness can come in any form. This does not suggest whether it will be classified as serious or not. But if a sickness takes a long time and does not respond to treatment, then it is serious and so it is referred to as ‘ako aisan’”.

‘Ako aisan’ in this sense means a very severe illness defying solution. This can either be hereditary or naturally caused. It can even be due to supernatural or preternatural forces. But the cause must be related to the host factor. It has been argued that host factors play important role in the etiology and manifestation of illness. This can be likened to the Yoruba concept of ‘ibode’. It was noted that not all diseases result in illness according to Powell. The Yoruba definition of illness equivalent of this is the ability of individual inner head to resist all misfortune as noted in the 207th verse of the Odu Ifa Ogundatutura:

“Ori rere ni isegun Ota  
Ori aisan I’ota I di ni adi pa”.

***Meaning:***

“It is a good head that overcomes the enemy;  
It is the defective head that the enemy renders impotent permanently”.

Disease is man’s enemy that renders individuals incapable of from performing the normal social obligations expected and transfers them from the community of the well to the community of the sick (Parsons 1978, 1951). Viewing it this way, one may be tempted to suggest that illness, as a misfortune is something that must befall some people whether they want it or not. This is even similar to Parson’s view which everybody always want to quit quickly.

For it is Yorubas, ‘ako aisan’ comes like any other illnesses but people do not get away from it quickly, as it is stated that “serious illness can render a person useless for the rest of his/her life”. Although data do not tell us what should be the duration of a mild illness for the Yorubas, measles was considered as a type of illness that may not last so long but can easily result in death. It was argued that “it is not in all cases that ‘ako aisan’ can last so long, but they can cause death so easily and measles is one such illness. Sometimes, it may be short in duration and result in many deaths especially during epidemics”. This suggests that a serious illness may be one that records high mortality rate. This may be the reason why more than 80% of the respondents immunized their children. In fact, a woman revealed that “since the advent of immunization, the rate of mortality due to measles has reduced considerably.



It is not that children do not have measles again but they do not die easily as the case was in the past. People now go to hospitals and they always get healed”.

One important observation from the data is that health education may be a catalyst between traditional and modern views of illness. Data show that a majority of the respondents attributed measles to natural causes, as opposed to traditional perceptions of illness. It was observed that some respondents though very small proportion still hold on to such traditional views of supernatural, preternatural and hereditary causes. But a common denominator between all of them is that they all view measles as serious. So it does not matter what people think are the causes of health problems they, regard as being dangerous. This suggests that regardless of the rate of change in peoples the view of causes of illness, perception of illnesses as either serious or mild may not be significantly altered. This is because any health problem that usually records a high mortality rate will always be categorized as serious. The implication of this is that it may spur early therapeutic help, as it was revealed that” once it is detected that a child has measles the best thing is to go to the hospital for treatment. In fact, that is why people must minimize their children”. This supports the premise of the health belief model (HBM) that the level of severity of illness will determine the action to be taken about such illness.

## **Conclusion**

The paper has discussed classification of illness among the Yoruba into male and female genders. It argued that this definition is a structural problem because Yoruba society is a patriarchal society where more importance is attributed to male than to female gender because of the belief that males are more ‘powerful’ than females. This is similar to Storev’s view of women that “when God created women, he made a uterus and built a woman around it; who then can trust the great questions of ‘life’ and ‘death’ to someone whose equilibrium varied from month to month, week to week, up and down” (Rosenthal et al 1982). Data indicate that perception of illness in this way may not only determine therapeutic action but also spur early .health-seeking behaviour. But the question is that can it influence therapeutic choice? It is not clear whether people explore modern or traditional health care. Since this is not the focus of his paper, it was not explored and this can be the focus of further research.



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## Whither the institution of widow inheritance in the era of HIV/AIDS? Tradition versus health

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### Abstract

*In Kenya, medical records show that districts occupied by the Luo ethnic community are worst hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. A number of risk factors have been cited, one of which is the ongoing practice of inheriting widows. A study done in the community revealed an overwhelming recognition (100% of the women and 92.7% of the men) that the practice is a potential risk factor for HIV transmission. This knowledge notwithstanding, 71.4% of the participants still expressed that they would wish to see their children, including daughters-in-law, observe this tradition in future. And among the widows who reported that their husbands had died of HIV/AIDS, 55.2% had already been inherited at the time of study (n=353). Why the apparent double standards? The paper presents conceptual scenario where widow inheritance would be a risk factor for HIV transmission on the one hand, and where it would act as a check to the spread of the epidemic, on the other. It compares the practice of inheritance in the past and at present, and points out the potential dangers in today's version, especially with the onslaught of "professional inheritors". With widows often caught between the forces of culture and safeguarding their health, the paper offers some middle ground that could appeal to both interest groups - those advocating observance of culture and those concerned with preserving health.*

### Introduction: HIV/AIDS among the study population

Clusters of high HIV seropositivity are evident in Kenya as they are in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. There is a wide disparity in AIDS cases between provinces (table 1). Until recently, it was a requirement that HIV/AIDS cases were recorded according to the province of reporting site (PRS) and the province of birth (PB). Thus, it is relatively accurate to link cases to specific ethnic communities living in respective provinces. As such, most of the 31.5% of the cases born in Nyanza (Table 1) are more likely than

not to be from the Luo, Abagusii, Abakuria, and/or Abasuba communities who are the main residents of the area.

Detailed statistics within the province further reveal that 29.2% of the 31.5% cases were from districts predominantly occupied by the Luo ethnic community - Siaya, Kisumu, and South Nyanza (KNASCOP, 1994), implying that both within the province and nationally, the Luo community has been worst hit by the epidemic.

**Table 1: Reported AIDS cases in Kenya by province, 1991-1994 (Percent)**

| Provinces*    | 1991 |      | 1992 |      | 1993 |      | 1994 |      | Totals** |      |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|----------|------|
|               | PRS  | PB   | PRS  | PB   | PRS  | PB   | PRS  | PB   | PRS      | PB   |
| Nairobi       | 17.6 | 7.5  | 13.0 | 1.9  | 10.3 | 2.8  | 13.6 | 5.7  | 13.4     | 4.9  |
| Central       | 6.9  | 8.5  | 6.7  | 7.8  | 7.8  | 9.2  | 11.1 | 13.6 | 7.1      | 9.2  |
| Coast         | 31.5 | 11.7 | 23.5 | 9.0  | 21.5 | 6.8  | 5.5  | 3.0  | 26.4     | 9.6  |
| Eastern       | 8.4  | 13.3 | 12.3 | 15.2 | 14.7 | 16.2 | 21.0 | 22.8 | 11.6     | 15.4 |
| North Eastern | 0.1  | 0.3  | 0.4  | 0.3  | 0.2  | 0.3  | 0.5  | 0.4  | 0.2      | 0.3  |
| NYANZA        | 19.0 | 29.0 | 28.4 | 34.7 | 23.3 | 30.2 | 21.9 | 28.6 | 22.7     | 31.5 |
| Rift Valley   | 13.3 | 8.3  | 10.1 | 7.0  | 14.5 | 9.4  | 19.0 | 14.6 | 12.1     | 8.6  |
| Western       | 3.1  | 6.7  | 5.6  | 6.2  | 7.7  | 8.6  | 7.5  | 9.3  | 6.2      | 9.1  |

**Source:** Statistics obtained from Kenya National AIDS Control Program. 1994.

**KEY:** PRS = Province of reporting site; PB = Province of birth

\* Percentages do not add to 100 because of incomplete records.

\*\* Totals were derived from data between 1987 and 1994.

This is because the Luo constitute only 12.38% of Kenya's population and account for 29.2% of the cases whereas the Kikuyu of Central Kenya, for instance, constitute 20.78% and the Luyias of Western Kenya 14.8% of the national population (Kenya. 1995), yet they account for only 9.2% and 9.1 % of the cases respectively.

A number of hypotheses have been proposed to explain the apparent ease of HIV transmission among the Luo compared with other ethnic communities. Social, economic, and cultural factors have been implicated in the elevated risk of the transmission including polygyny, non-circumcision of the males, widow inheritance 1, population mobility and migration, and sexual networking (Okeyo, 1994; Agot, 1996; KNASCP, 1996). This paper focuses on widow inheritance as a potential risk factor for HIV transmission. .

<sup>1</sup>Widow inheritance is being practiced in varying degrees in many parts of Africa, for instance, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Guinea, Sudan (FEMNET. 1994; Okeyo, 1994; Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell, 1994a; 1994b; Caldwell, Caldwell, and Quiggin, 1994). It is found especially in many patrilineal societies (Caldwell, Caldwell. and Quiggin. 1994). As such, the practice is not confined to the Luo or other communities in Kenya. In Uganda for instance, it is reported that among the Rakai, many young wives leave symptomatic husbands and have little problem in remarrying if they appear to be robust and healthy (Caldwell, Caldwell. and Quiggin, 1994). High levels of remarrying have also been reported among the Akan of Ghana (Awusobo Asare, Anarfi, and Agyeman. 1993) and the Ekiti of Nigeria (Orubuloye, Caldwell and Caldwell, 1994a).

### **The Luo family system provides fertile ground for inheriting widows**

The Luo are strongly patrilineal and patrilocal in their family and lineage systems (Ochola Ayayo, 1971; Mboya. 1938). Traditionally, women have minimal recognition in the families in which they are born. They are regarded as temporary members in their maiden homes. They belong to wherever they will be married. As such, property was, and still is, reserved for male children. Hence, an unmarried woman has limited place and status in her paternal home and the most sure way of achieving status is through marriage. Hence marriage bonds usually tie women down as it is a contract which brings with it status and identity (Othieno Ochieng', 1968; Agot. 1996). However, even after marriage, property, including herself and her children, are considered to belong to the husband and his extended family. For instance, a wife cannot sell anything of value such as livestock or land, unless permitted by the husband, or his male kin, and in their absence, a grown son becomes the next legal authority whose approval must be sought (Agot, 1996). On the other hand, the son would consult the father or paternal uncles about such transactions, and in their absence, he may go ahead and execute them without necessarily having to inform or involve his mother.

With respect to marriage, the Luo have regarded the institution as a sacred bond which, once contracted, should not be broken (Mboya, 1938; 1978). Traditionally, there was no place for divorced, separated, or single women; the parents and relatives would not welcome back a daughter who has left her husband for whatever reason except witchcraft. In the event of separation or

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<sup>1</sup>Widow Inheritance is a practice where a brother of the deceased or his cousin is expected to assume responsibility over the widow's economic social and conjugal needs. The practice is intended to retain the widow in her matrimonial home for details see Agot 1996.

remarriage by those considered cultural “dissidents”, rare though it was, both the woman and her children continue to belong to her first husband. She is expected to return to her original home, in life or in death, unless dowry was returned. A girl of marriageable age and above, whether married or not, was not permitted to be buried within her father’s homestead, and in many instances, women may put up with turbulent marriages or risky traditions to reserve burial places. In addition, since children belong to the husband, couples often stick together for the sake of the children.

Even after the death of the husband, the woman was, and in many instances still is, expected to be inherited by her brother-in-law since she continues to belong to the clan. Children born out of this union carry the name of the deceased. The inheritor is expected to have his own family, while the widow is to remain in her matrimonial home (Mboya, 1938; 1978; Ochola Ayayo, 1971). In the past, widow inheritance was a societal obligation for the widow and was not negotiable. Today, the culture is still highly esteemed and followed by many (Agot, ongoing). One of the major rationale is that the ritual officially cleanses the widow from the ‘stain’ of death and “protects” her against any misfortunes that could befall her family, should she decide to have outside sexual affairs. Other benefits include: societal acceptance, economic support and social security, as well as for procreation purposes. Above all, however, the practice ensures that the widow is retained in her matrimonial home and that she has a sexual partner to enable her to observe the ushering in of important events in the Luo calendar (Mboya, 1938; 1978; Othieno Ochieng’ 1978; Agot, 1996). For example, for couples who keep traditions, sexual intercourse must be performed to usher in agricultural seasons, to mark the construction of a home or entering into a new house, to precede the consummation of a marriage of their children, and in many other occasions (Agot, ongoing).

In homes with more than one married couple or with many wives, such as in polygynous homes or where married sons are still living in their parents’ homes, inheritance of surviving widows follow a pecking order. The first wife of the deceased must be inherited first, followed by the second wife, and so on. Similarly, a mother-in-law would have to be inherited first if she is a widow before her daughter-in-law. Also, one’s own biological mother must be inherited before the daughter become eligible for inheritance. The same order is followed when observing ritual sex within a homestead to mark the start of events (Agot, ongoing). As such, for one to decide against being inherited would’ be tantamount to denying the younger widows/wives/sisters the opportunity to participate in these activities, since they cannot bypass the older women, or else they risk losing their children. To guard against this, the family

and the entire clan, sometimes even one's own children, would gang up in arms against her, should she decide to evade the tradition.

### **How widow inheritance could be a potential risk factor for HIV?**

This sub-section aims to highlight the major cultural beliefs and practices that touch on the Luo sexuality and sexual system, particularly as they relate to the institution of widow inheritance. The inclusion of this outline is intended to provide a framework for understanding the Luo human ecology of HIV/AIDS, as it is intertwined with cultural beliefs. Mboya (1938), Ochola Ayayo (1971), Sindiga (1992), Agot (1995), for example, emphasize the focal role of *kwer* (taboo. *Kweche*, pl.) in the Luo moral code. *Kwer* (taboo) defines all moral acts and obligations, the consequences of which may inflict suffering to an individual or his family, including extended family. The Luo life is vigorously governed by *kweche* (taboos), particularly during pregnancy, birth, lactation, marriage, death, putting up a home, and in ushering in different farming seasons (ploughing, planting, weeding and harvesting) (Mboya, 1938; 1978; Agot, 1996; ongoing). A common denominator that could protect one from the consequences of these *kweche* is sexual fidelity (see Agot, 1996 for details). To forestall having sexual relations with someone other than one's spouse during these events, it was, and still is, required that one should have sex with his/her partner prior to the events. Although the misfortunes that can befall one who does not observe the *kweche* are many and varied, the commonest health consequence is the undiagnosed and undefined wasting away of the body, called *chira*. The concept of *chira* (the gradual wasting away of the body) comes from the word *chiyo*, which means sucking or draining away of something. Any illness whose symptoms include wasting is quite often perceived as *chira* (Mboya, 1938; 1978; Othino Ochieng', 1968; Agot, 1996; ongoing). Perhaps such cultural perception of disease aetiology has side-tracked the dangers of continuing with this practice because a wasting disease such as AIDS would, and has, neatly fallen into the *chira* category. With such a misconception, the cry is that the advent of AIDS has apparently had little effect in reducing the incidence of widow inheritance (Okeyo, 1993; Agot, 1996; on-going).

### **Conceptual scenario in widow inheritance and HIV transmission**

The risk of contracting HIV/AIDS through the practice of widow inheritance has been a subject of debate for quite some time now. It would be expected that, while there is still no cure, AIDS would act as a force of Change



from the tradition because no culture should hurt its practitioners, and no tradition should lead its people to the grave. Why then has this apparent ‘suicidal’ practice persisted despite the AIDS epidemic? What is it that is causing resistance to this change? The article maintains that the culture has not been understood in its holistic perspective and that the positive attributes cited earlier in the paper may make the fear of AIDS less threatening than discarding the practice altogether. Yet the gravity of the epidemic continues to deepen and widen as the transmission is presenting a rapidly spreading network of victims. For instance, in any sexual relationship, one infected person may infect at least one more person, namely, his/her partner. If the two remain faithful to each other, this would be the end of the transmission line. If this pattern was replicated everywhere, theoretically only one extra person could be infected for every one having the virus. The spread would thus be relatively stable.

However, if the virus were first contracted through sexual means, it implies that while this infection line may terminate with the demise of the two if they remain faithful to each other, it certainly did not begin there. The partner who first contracted the virus got it from someone else who also contracted it from another, and so on and so forth, and the line goes back into the unknown. In other words, to be conservative, we would conclude that even if the couple dies without passing the infection to anyone else, at least one infection line remains open: the initial source.

In reality however, the scenario is far more complex than the linear representation hypothesized above. Often, the transmission is exacerbated by concurrent multiple sexual partners for every one infected, such that the infection rate may multiply in a more diffuse rather than linear manner. For instance, cultural practices such as polygyny and widow inheritance, or other forms of sexual networking, each of which involves multiple sexual partners, have the potential of expanding the infection network indefinitely. This is largely because, unlike other STDs where a line of infection can be terminated by treatment, AIDS still has no definitive cure and therefore any infection line started has the potential to multiply unimpeded.

A hypothetical scenario of such diffusion in a situation of widow inheritance would resemble the flow chart in Fig 1. Players in the inner core depict a linear infection line where Jane is inherited by Mike who is formally married to Rose. Mike may either be infected by Jane who was infected by her late husband, or by some other person. Alternatively, Jane may be infected by Mike, who may already have infected, or been infected by Rose. If this relationship is maintained, the line of transmission would end with the demise of the three core players’. The model, however, represents a multiple infection

network which could represent what is envisaged in reality. For instance, Jane could be HIV-positive and have an inheritor and maybe (an) other lover(s). If the inheritor and/or the lover(s) are married, some, perhaps, to several wives, who may also harbour secret lovers/casual sex partner(s) with wives and/or other sexual partners and the network spreads, then the picture of how the practice of widow inheritance could become a risk factor in HIV transmission becomes clear. In other words, for each line of infection, the threshold continues to widen indefinitely. As seen in this scenario, only three players were in the initial picture: Mike, Rose and Jane, but indefinite numbers of co-players also join the network behind the scene, so to speak, both before and after the three core players.

On the other hand, cultures where widow inheritance is not required are not necessarily insulated from HIV. A sexually active HIV-positive widow is still a risk to, or from, society, whether she is inherited or not. This is because if the widow remains formally single but has sexual affairs, we begin to wonder how many would be victims of her escapades, if she is zero-positive. Or, how much risk would she be exposed to if she is zero-negative. In other words, if a widow in cultures where widows are not formally inherited is infected but does not remain celibate, or else legally remarries, then someone or some people somewhere will still be led to the grave. It therefore remains a question of what is more threatening - risking the lives of a couple of people in the same family or clan by getting inherited and, hopefully, sticking to one man, or being responsible for deaths of an unknown number victims who are at large by having multiple sexual affairs.

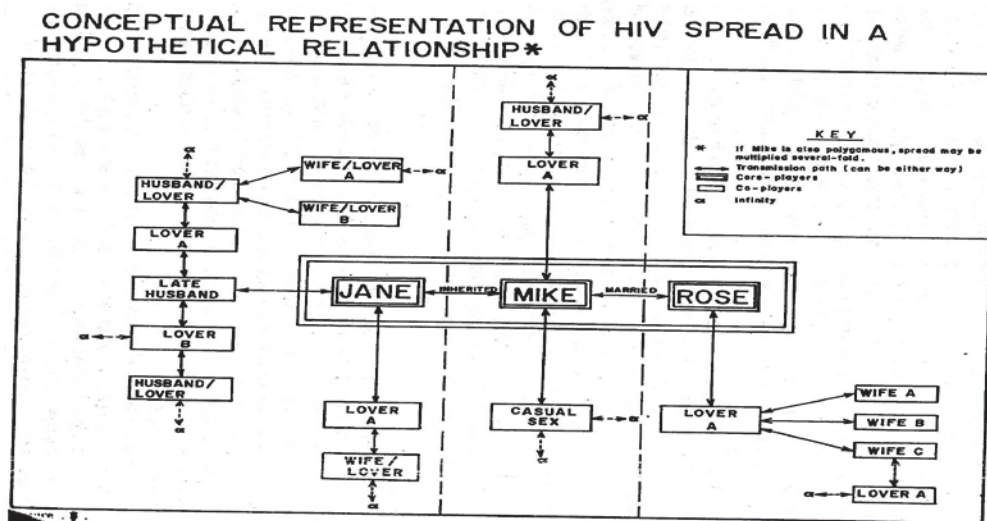
## **Methods**

Field study informing this paper was conducted in Bondo district (recently carved out of Siaya district), Nyanza province, Western Kenya. The province was selected because it has consistently led in the HIV/AIDS zero prevalence in the whole country (Table 1). Within the province, sub-locations in North Sakwa and Usigu locations were selected because they depict a typical subsistence economy characteristic of the study area, namely, peasant farming and fishing. In addition, information was also collected from Bondo town to incorporate those engaged in other types of economic activities not covered in the other two areas, for example, shopkeepers, hoteliers, dealers in second-hand merchandise, and so on.

Respective chiefs, their assistants, and village/clan headmen compiled lists of all households in the selected sub-locations. They also marked on their lists households where widows were inherited, and those where they were not.

Eligibility criterion for widowhood was between January 1<sup>st</sup> 1992 to December 31<sup>st</sup>. 1994 - a period of 3 years. Chiefs have a responsibility of processing burial permits for those under their jurisdiction, and therefore had records of the dates of deaths. They also marked households where AIDS was suspected or confirmed as the cause of death. To corroborate this information, all widows and other relatives who offered to participate in the interview were asked, both discreetly and then directly, the cause of death. Discreetly by probing the details about the nature of the illness prior to death, particularly those relating weight loss, tuberculosis, diarrhoea and vomiting, boils, oral candidiasis, and other easy-to-recognize signs and symptoms of AIDS.

From the lists compiled by the village elders, there were 353 eligible widows in the selected sub-locations in North Sakwa and Usigu at the time of the interview, with 195 (55.2%) of them inherited, 127 (36.0%) not inherited, and 31 (8.8%) where the respondents were not certain of their inheritance status. This figure excludes the widows who had moved back to the cities as their status could also not be established.



## Data Collection

Field data was collected from June, 1995 to February, 1996. Three methods of data collection were used: household interviews, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Opinion was sought regarding past and present benefits of the practice; perceived implications for HIV/AIDS transmission; and the desired future of the practice. Questions on HIV/AIDS aetiology covered awareness level, perceived causes and prevention strategies, and knowledge of signs and symptoms of the illness.

## Results and Discussion

Although it may appear as if the Luos have not conceptualized the link between widow inheritance and AIDS because 55.2% of the eligible widows were inherited, this was not so. All the women in the study (100%) and 92.7% of the men knew that the practice has a potential of increasing the risk of HIV. Yet more than half of the widows were already inherited. Similarly, a study by Okeyo (1993) among the Luo found that 51 % of the widows of likely AIDS victims who died between November, 1991 and October, 1992 had been inherited, and 36% were planning to be inherited. Only 12% refused to be inherited due to fear of contracting HIV. And one third of the 51% already inherited had 'divorced' previous partners. There were also cases where the current inheritor was the third since the death of the spouse just one year prior to the study. Ordinarily, widow inheritance takes place 612 months after the death of the spouse. The rate of partner exchange, in addition to the fact that often times the inheritors also have other sexual partners (wives and/or other widows and/or casual sexual partners), and also that the sexual component was a mandatory aspect of the contract, add together to spell ominous implications to HIV spread.

Okeyo's study also found that 78% of the 47 widows already inherited and 33% of the 34 who intended to be inherited and who had already identified the inheritors and set official dates, about two-thirds of the men were monogamous while the rest were polygynous. And 32% of these men had a history of previously inheriting other widows. Since the onset of HIV/AIDS, men are becoming rather scared of inheriting widows whose husbands' deaths are suspicious. Widows who want to keep the traditions resort to wooing someone else, often from a distant clan or another ethnic community, to accomplish the task. These are referred to as professional inheritors (*Uokowiny*). Some of these professionals had a history of inheriting more than five widows in the past.

To understand why 55.2% prevalence is still being realised among the Luo, perhaps the reasons cited by parents about their position towards inheritance for their children would help clarify their attitude towards the practice. Table 2 below summarizes the reasons advanced by parents why they would, or would not, prefer to have their children enter into inheritance relationship. Increasing the chances of STD/HIV infection emerged as an important factor against the practice. Respondents felt that this is particularly so because of the emergence of professional inheritors a crop of people with a tradition of inheriting widows. This phenomenon was virtually absent in the past during which time an inheritor had to be a brother or a paternal cousin to the deceased; the

reason being that children born out of such a union would at least share closer blood relations with the biological children of the deceased and therefore would more effectively perpetuate his lineage. Also, a brother or cousin would have the welfare of the deceased at heart, and thus be more committed to the economic and social wellbeing of his home compared with an outsider or a stranger. In this original version of inheritance, elders sat down and participated in making arrangements and the institution received societal blessings. Nothing was done in secret. But now, inheriting widows is fast becoming a profession, and like any other ‘income-generating’ profession, the main objective of many inheritors today is to continuously widen the threshold of their clientele. The consequent creation of a beckoning environment for sexual networking and STD/HIV transmission need not be over emphasized.

**Table 2: Parental opinion about widow inheritance for their children (Percent)**

| Reasons for refusal                              | NO to widow inheritance |           |                  | Reasons for acceptance                        | YES to widow inheritance |           |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|------------------|
|                                                  | Sons                    | Daughters | Daughters-in-law |                                               | Sons                     | Daughters | Daughters-in-law |
| Risk for AIDS                                    | 37.5                    | 50        | 53.6             | Keep traditions                               | 72.2                     | 54.4      | 63.9             |
| Threaten peace between wives                     | 33.3                    | 20.6      | 14.3             | Retain widow in matrimonial home              | 8.3                      | 17.7      | 13.1             |
| Inheritance now derogatory                       | 12.5                    | 0         | 0                | Curb sexual networking                        | 15.3                     | 16.5      | 7.9              |
| It's her or her people's choice                  | 0                       | 29.4      | 17.9             | Get more children                             | 0                        | 5.1       | 9.7              |
| Character of children from inheritors unbecoming | 0                       | 0         | 10.7             | Others, condition for precontractual HIV test | 4.2                      | 6.3       | 5.6              |
| Others                                           | 16.7                    | 0         | 3.6              |                                               |                          |           |                  |

## Whither the institution of inheritance?

In this apparent continuing centrality of widow inheritance, the questions that come to mind are: Where do we go from here? What predictions can we make about the future trend of the practice among the Luo? To get a pointer towards the future, the study sought the opinion of parents as to whether or not they would recommend the practice to their sons, daughters, and daughters-in-law and their view of the possible link of widow inheritance and HIV transmission. More directly, they were asked whether the practice should continue or cease. Table 3 below summarizes their responses. From the table, it is evident that widow inheritance is still a strongly-held tradition, with 38.8% of the mothers and 24.4% of the fathers wanting it to be retained, and 71.4% of those who want their sons to inherit, and daughters and daughters-in-law to be inherited, cited traditions as the factor compelling them to do so. The tradition is seen by parents to be more applicable to females than to males. Where they (parents) would wish to have their sons inherit their daughters-in-law, it was more to retain the latter at home and protect her and the children from possible chira (discussed earlier in the paper) should she later “stray” into sexual affairs outside the clan.

It is unfortunate to observe that while 71.4% wish to have their children observe the tradition, all the mothers (100%) as well as most of the fathers (92.7%) acknowledged that the practice accelerates the rate of HIV infection. This discrepancy between knowing that widow inheritance has the potential of accelerating the spread of HIV on the one hand, and observing the tradition (55.2% of the widows were inherited) on the other, is disturbing. Some of the reasons why people do not put into practice what they believe is highlighted in previous sections.

One finding that suffices to be emphasized is that in 85.5% of all the cases where the widows were inherited, the women themselves were willing participants in the arrangement. They were not forced or coerced; they simply consciously decided to observe the tradition as expected even though all of them knew the potential danger of such a tradition. It seems as if the fear of the consequences of disregarding the tradition was more threatening than risking getting HIV. Only 14.5% were forced into the relationship by their husbands' relatives, sometimes even in agreement with their own relatives. It is therefore worth noting that contrary to the assumptions set by the study that women are innocent victims of the practice of widow inheritance that may jeopardize their health in the era of HIV/AIDS, the women were actually willing participants. In fact, sometimes so willing that if none of her brothers-in-law was ready to inherit her for one reason or another she would easily

arrange to be inherited with someone outside her husband’s family lineage, technically a professional inheritor. Out of the 195 widows who were definitely inherited, 45.9% of the inheritors were professional. But their “willingness” should be understood in the context of the long-standing and deeply engraved fear of disregarding the practice. It would thus be in order to interpret their position as a “decision” between the forces of culture and preservation of health even though many times, the decision is far from being voluntary.

**Table 3: Selected indicators of the future trend of widow inheritance among the Luo (percent)**

| Indicators                                       | YES     |         | NO      |         | YES              |                  | NO               |                  |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                                                  | Mothers | Fathers | Mothers | Fathers | Mas%<br>of total | Fas%<br>of total | Mas%<br>of total | Fas%<br>of total |
| Want son to inherit?                             | 44.2    | 70.5    | 55.8    | 29.5    | 24.0             | 32.3             | 30.2             | 13.5             |
| Want daughter inherited?                         | 65.3    | 88.1    | 34.7    | 11.9    | 35.2             | 40.7             | 18.7             | 5.5              |
| Want daughter-in-law inherited?                  | 73.1    | 87.2    | 26.9    | 12.8    | 41.8             | 37.4             | 15.4             | 5.5              |
| Is widow inheritance a factor for HIV infection? | 100     | 92.7    | 0       | 7.3     | 56.4             | 40.4             | 0                | 3.2              |
| Want widow inheritance continue?                 | 38.8    | 24.4    | 61.2    | 75.6    | 21.1             | 11.1             | 33.3             | 34.4             |

### Conclusion

It is recognized that widow inheritance is a risk factor in the spread of HIV, yet the practice is still held in high esteem among the Luo. Over half of the respondents were inherited and many expressed the need for continuation of the tradition. Besides fulfilling material, social, and sexual needs of the widow, the practice is also intended to retain the woman in the matrimonial home and also for her to have someone around to enable her to fulfil sexual requirements preceding important events in the family/clan. Going by parental responses (see Table 3), it is evident that the tradition may live to see, at least, the early years of the next millennium. As such, what a number of the respondents are suggesting in an on-going study by Agot is that for those who wish to continue with the practice, and there are many, HIV testing should precede contracting such a relationship. This way, neither tradition nor health would be compromised, until a time when the tradition would die a natural death, should this become necessary.



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## A Folk Model of Malaria Causation among the Abagusii of South-western Kenya: Implications for Malaria Treatment

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### Abstract

*In recent years, malaria has re-emerged as a major health issue in the tropics. It is a major cause of human suffering leading to enormous economic losses. A folk model of malaria causation is presented here. The model is based on malaria-focused ethnographic interviews conducted over a three-month period, part of a 10-month malaria project, in Gusii South-western Kenya. Abagusii have multiple notions of malaria causation with the mosquito (85.7% of informants) as the leading cause. Other causes are eating sugary foods (57.1%) and witchcraft (34.3%). Implications for malaria control programs are discussed.*

**Key words:** Malaria, folk model, focused ethnographic interviews, Gusii, Kenya

### Introduction

In recent years, malaria has emerged as a major health issue in Gusii, South-western Kenya, reflecting a major worldwide trend after its near eradication a generation ago. Over 100 million people in Africa are exposed to the malaria parasite each year with more than 500 million classified as at risk. In Africa, the death toll from malaria is estimated to be between one and two million people, mostly children under five years of age (Meuris et al. 1986, Nevill 1990) and, due to widespread chloroquine-resistant parasites, the number of people affected continues to rise. The estimated annual economic loss suffered due to inability to perform work, costs incurred in treatment of malaria and losses due to death is enormous.

Throughout human history, lay people have held various notions regarding malaria causation. For example, centuries before Ronald Ross, Hippocrates attributed the cause of fevers, which were later identified as malaria, to bile

(black and yellow) which together with phlegm and blood constituted the four humours of the body. Bile was regarded as the most immediate intrinsic cause of malaria (Boyd 1949: 11). The ancient Romans believed malaria to be the result of bad air coming from marshy areas, which led them to advocate for the drainage of these areas as an intervention. The notions of malaria causation have changed over time as new insights into the disease continue to emerge. It is not until the last decade of the 18th Century that the mosquito was identified as the vector for the malaria parasites. Ronald Ross, then working in India, demonstrated conclusively the stages of development of the parasite that causes malaria.

Despite widespread knowledge gains regarding malaria and the association of mosquitoes with the disease, lay people also link malaria to several other causes (see Helitzer-Allen 1989, Agyepong 1992, Fivawo 1993, Mwenesi et al. 1995, Makemba et al. 1996 for examples). In Ghana, Asra, a disease with similar symptoms as malaria, is believed to be the result of prolonged contact with heat (Agyepong 1992). Similarly, cerebral malaria is regarded as resulting from several causes in addition to mosquitoes. In Kilifi on the Kenya coast, Mwenesi et al. (1995) have reported that mothers regard cerebral malaria to be the result of invasion by spirits that enter the brain to affect the victim. In Tanzania, these are known as *Degegede* (Makemba et al. 1996). Helitzer-Allen (1989), in Malawi, and Fivawo (1993), in Tanzania, have reported similar findings.

Although the problem of malaria in Gusii is recognized from lay people's ethnographic accounts, it is only recently that it has attracted widespread attention. There are a number of reasons for this. First, Gusii is a highland region. The high altitude coupled with seasonal variations in temperatures provides a unstable environment for a high level of transmission throughout the year. Secondly, over the years demographic factors-high population growth rate, have caused farmers in Gusii to maximize available space. As a result, land is cultivated up to areas surrounding the homestead (Nyamongo 1998). The seasonal variations in temperature and an increase in population density have interacted to produce seasonal but intense malaria epidemics. The seasonal malaria outbreaks also imply that people's immunity against malaria is poorly developed. Therefore, malaria cases in Gusii lead to considerable human suffering.

In this paper, I present data from Gusii on what lay people perceive as the cause of malaria. An ethnographically derived folk model based on lay people's interpretation of the suffering they experience due to malaria is presented. I then link this model to their anti-malaria behaviour followed by a discussion

on the implications of the findings for malaria control programs in Gusii and in other areas with a malaria problem.

## **Data and Methods**

This study was carried out in Suneka Division of Kisii district over a 10-month period, from February to November, 1997. Suneka has several private and government health care facilities. The private health care facilities are located within the shopping centres with the majority of them in Suneka Township. There are four government health care facilities-Nyamagundo, Riotanchi, Riana and Iyabe-which are linked by a poor road network. Iterio health centre and maternity, located in Suneka Township, is operated by the Lutheran Church (Nyamongo 1999).

The data on which this paper is based were obtained through detailed malaria focused ethnographic interviews conducted over a three-month period, from June to August, 1997. Thirty-five informants, ranging in age from 18 years to 80 years, were interviewed on various issues but with specific reference to their lived experience with malaria. Data were collected on lay people's recognition and interpretation of malaria and what they do when they diagnose malaria. Informants were requested to allow me tape record their accounts before the interviews started. They were assured that these information will be held in confidence and that the final report shall not have any identifying information. These assurances were necessary because some of the information sought covered socially sensitive topics such as witchcraft, which, sometimes is said to be the cause of malaria. Each interview lasted about one hour.

The recorded interviews were then transcribed by two Gusii speaking University anthropology students and myself. These ethnographic interviews yielded a large corpus of text data, which I processed and coded using EZ-Text (Carey et al. 1997). The coding followed a preliminary codebook developed during the transcription of the recorded interviews. I created new codes whenever the need arose. Each time I did this, I went back to check whether the new codes applied to already coded interviews. The resulting data was then imported into SPSS for further analysis. A thematic approach enabled me to develop a folk model of how the Abagusii account for the various causes of malaria.

## Findings and Discussion

The majority (86% or 30 informants) of those interviewed recognize the mosquito as the leading cause of malaria. However, there are other causes of malaria which were reported. These causes centre on the types of foods a person consumes as well as actions of ill-intentioned individuals. Over one-half (57.1 %) of informants reported that eating sugary foods - sugarcane and ripe bananas, and roasted green corn can lead to malaria. Other actions that are thought to cause malaria are eating too many groundnuts and dried molasses (*sukari nguru*). A person can also catch malaria as a result of actions by individuals (e.g. *abarogi* or witches) whose aim, it is believed, is to cause harm to a person or his kin. Thus, according to some informants (34%), malaria may be caused in this manner. From the accounts collected, it is clear that people in Bomorenda have a multiple causal folk theory of malaria. I present this model in Figure 1.

Based on the ethnographic interviews the folk theory of malaria causation in Gusiican be described thus: a person eats sugary foods-sugar cane, ripe bananas, dried molasses, and other types of foods like groundnuts. The sugar in these foods accumulates in the body to form *esosere*<sup>2</sup>. When *esosera* accumulates the individual suffers malaria (or it makes an existing malaria condition worse). The body reacts by expelling the offending agents, usually through vomiting and sometimes diarrhoea. The patients may use emetics in belief that it will lead to faster healing. The causal explanation is made vivid by the informants' own narratives given below:

[7-6]: *Okong'o: You know with malaria you can vomit and have diarrhoea as well.*

*Isaac: That is what we call esosera.*

*0: If you have malaria, vomiting makes you feel better. Particularly if you have, in addition, some slight diarrhoea. Diarrhoea will make you feel weak but that is all right because you are healed. You will not need to go to hospital if you take pills. (Okong'o - 024)*

[7-7]: *Isaac: .... You said vomiting esosera helps bring out malaria.*

*Bonareri: Yes, when the patient gets esosera, you let them vomit until it is all finished and then give the patient malaria pills..... (Bonareri - 019)*

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<sup>2</sup>*Esosera* is the green or yellow bile salts that a person vomits when malaria is present thus Abagusii use the term *esosera* and malaria interchangeably. I have not been able to establish whether Abagusii have a humeral theory (or a variation of it) as put forth by Hippocrates.

Twenty-seven (77%) of informants reported that vomiting or diarrhoea, when accompanied by appropriate treatment, leads to faster healing of malaria (Figure 1 and Table 1).

Thus, according to folk explanations malaria can result from actions of the affected individuals, which include eating too much green corn and groundnuts. Green corn is of interest here. Corn matures beginning around May to late July which, in a normal year, is also a period of long rains and high mosquito density associated with increase of malaria. Abagusii's association of malaria and eating green maize is a spurious one. It is probably a mechanism that is meant to protect the green corn so that it matures for harvesting. The same is true for groundnuts. To achieve maximum yield, ground nuts are planted in March just as the long rains set in. During the rainy season the nuts are formed, usually within three months. Farmers harvest the nuts to boil, which are then consumed at home or sold in the market for extra income. As for the case of sugar, children chew sugarcane (and sometimes corn stalks) and suck the sweet sap. All these activities take place during the rainy season when mosquito density is high and due to high cases, lay people associate malaria with their actions (behaviour). The culprit here is not the eating of corn (or groundnuts or sugarcane) it is the increase in the mosquito population which then transmits malaria-causing parasites.

The association between sugary foods and malaria plays directly into people's beliefs about sugar and malaria. Eleven informants (31%) said that sugary foods should be avoided when a person has malaria, while 19 informants (57%) reported that sugary foods can cause malaria. I tested whether people who report that certain kinds of foods can lead to malaria (CAUSE2), are also likely to report that those foods should be avoided (AVOID2), especially when they are sick. A nominal logistic regression between the variable CAUSE2 and AVOID2 yields a significant relationship ( $p < 0.05$ , odds ratio = 14) and differences between men and women are statistically independent ( $X^2 = 1.11168$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $P > 0.05$ ). This implies that there are no differences in knowledge regarding beliefs held by male and female informants.

According to informants (e.g. [7-8]), the third manner through which malaria may be caused is through witchcraft. Some informants (12 of 35 or 34%) mentioned that *oborogi* (Witchcraft) may be implicated in causing malaria although it is not something proven. In the case of Gusii many people believe that witchcraft causes harm. In fact, some chronic (and/or fatal) illnesses, even when they are positively identified in hospital, are considered by some to be the result of witchcraft. Culturally, Abagusii belief that death does not just occur, it is brought upon us by others witches-intent on causing harm.

However, lay people are careful to disclose such information to family or trusted friends only. They fear that the accused person may cause them further harm. As a result, reports on witchcraft are only partially made by lay people and often when the illness is fatal or chronic.

One or more witches usually direct witchcraft to an individual or group of individuals. Allegations about witchcraft are more likely to be made if there is a death in the family as will become evident from the excerpt of one of the interviews [7-8]. From this, it is apparent that some informants, while not being open about it, believe that death can be caused by witchcraft. Here is what Mogoi - 013 said when asked whether witchcraft is a factor to be considered in the cause of malaria:

*[7-8]: Recently we had a similar case. A child died apparently due to malaria. One evening after the child's funeral service someone said that soon there would be another service. A few days later a second child passed away. The victim's relatives started suspecting that witchcraft has caused the child's death. That is quite common. People here do not think a person can die of malaria they usually transfer the blame to a human cause. Even though these days death is caused by witchcraft and then blamed on malaria.... That is what is going on, especially for people residing in reserve (not in towns), particularly among women who quarrel all the time. Quarreling about chicken and cattle. (Mogoi - 013).*

My experience among the Abagusii is that people are very secretive when talking about witchcraft often communicating only among affected family and very close friends. Calling someone *Omorogi* (Witch) has far-reaching social repercussions. There are several cases in which people accused of *oborogi* have had their houses burnt and property destroyed in Suneka, the study site, and other parts of Gush. These incidents are reported widely in the media, as far as Los Angeles. For example, in September 1993, The Los Angeles Times reported that 44 people, all accused of practicing witchcraft, had been burnt to death in their grass thatched houses over a period of two months in what they called "a phenomenon reminiscent of the Salem witch trials in 17th-Century Massachusetts" (The Los Angeles Times, Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1993). Practicing witchcraft (or black magic) is against Kenyan laws, but rarely are people brought to court for practicing it.

Lynching of suspects and the reaction of authorities make people very secretive because there is no telling when a group of people, usually young men, will gang up to administer 'justice'<sup>3</sup>: In almost all instances those who

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<sup>3</sup>In September 1998, ten people accused of practicing witchcraft were killed, including an 80-year-old woman, in Bomorenda where this study was conducted. According to a Kenyan



administer 'justice' are youths. Ogembo (1997) discusses this issue in greater detail. He argues that the witch-hunts result from the negative effect economic changes have had on health care which in turn has reactivated Gusii beliefs about evil and misfortune (Ogembo 1997).

Explanations regarding the cause and effect of cerebral malaria differ from those about malaria. Lay people in Gusii report that cerebral malaria affects the brain of the victim. This happens in two ways. One, a connection is believed to exist between the head and the rest of the body. The local explanation is that when a person has high fever and does not diarrhoea, it causes the fever to rise through the spinal cord and gets into the brain. (This has the concept of the way mercury rises in a thermometer - the higher the temperature the greater and faster the mercury rises.) Kerandi - 034 [7-9] provides a folk mechanism of how this results:

*[7-9]: Kerandi: Abagusii say that when malaria becomes chronic it gets into the brain to cause cerebral malaria.... It starts like the usual malaria except that its progression is fast. The patient may not be transfused because they do not have a fever. And, sometimes the patient may have a fever without diarrhoea. It then gets into the brain and the patient becomes violent. Cerebral malaria is like the other malaria, but when it has reached a certain stage it causes convulsions. It can progress very fast causing convulsions and, also, cause you to become violent. (Kerandi - 034)*

Diarrhoea seems to achieve two things: it reduces the level of the 'rising fluid' by removing it, which in the process also removes the excess heat to lower the body temperature. **If** the patient does not get diarrhoea, the 'fluid' rises into and affects the brain resulting in convulsions that are common in cerebral malaria cases.

The other explanation given is that the patient is a victim of social problems within the homestead. This is captured in the next three statements from informants Bocharberi - 011, Bisieri - 027 and Kemunto - 032.

*[7-10]: Bocharberi: .... In a polygynous homestead the husband is more affectionate to the younger wife. The other is left alone and often starts thinking of their earlier life together; she remembers how her husband used to provide for her children and how they used to plan together. Now, with a co-wife, that is all gone. Cerebral malaria then affects her and causes her to become violent. [7-11]: Isaac: Why do patients become violent when they have cerebral malaria?*

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Daily (Sunday Nation, Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>, 1998) the ten suspects were taken from their homes in the wee hours of the morning by a mob of youths.

*Bisieri: It might be because of a lot of problems that leave you with mental instability. Sometimes cerebral malaria may result because the fever affects your brain.*

*[7-12]: Isaac: What causes cerebral malaria?*

*Kemunto: It is due to too much noise and because of thinking too much about your social problems. [Afterwards the informant explains too much noise as quarreling at home.]*

As a result of these problems the victims are under a lot of stress which is thought to cause them to have cerebral malaria. The social problems may include quarreling among family members (see Kemunto - 032, [7-12]) or lack of funds to run activities at home or to send children to school (see Bisieri - 027, [7-11]).

The first explanation gets closer to explanations provided. Fever beyond what the body can regulate can cause damage to brain cells, convulsions leading to coma and eventual death if no actions are taken to reverse the situation. Association of cerebral malaria with witchcraft or spirits has been reported in Malawi (Helitzer-Allen 1989) and Tanzania (Fivawo 1993). Makemba et al. (1996) report of a locally recognized febrile illness in Bagamoyo district Tanzania in which children who have fever and convulsions are treated by traditional healers. This illness is believed, by the local community to be caused by *degedege*, a bird that enters the victim. These have also been reported by Mwenesi et al. (1995) among the Mijikenda of Kilifi, Kenya. Some informants (5 of 35) reported that cerebral malaria may be caused through witchcraft. However, my findings differ from these studies in that Abagusii also associate cerebral malaria with unstable social relations within the family, which lead to mental instability. Indicators of this social instability include quarreling and, in polygynous homesteads, unequal distribution of resources by the husband. I did not come across explicit reports of invasion by foreign objects, such as birds, that cause malaria in Gusii although, as noted earlier, this is implied in folk accounts such as is the case of malaria and vomiting.

In Figure 2, I present a model of how cerebral malaria results. The emic explanation is that, foreign agents (spirits, animals) or such other agent that may be caused by witchcraft, and social problems affect the normal functioning of the brain. Fever also can cause convulsions and coma, both of which are indicators of cerebral malaria. Though the etic and emic are in agreement that the brain is affected, the mechanism through which that occurs differs. The etic account is that the temperature exceeds a critical point after which the normal functioning of the brain is affected. The emic account, however, links the rise in body temperature to absence of diarrhoea (or vomit).

If the patient does not have diarrhoea, the fever rises and eventually affects the brain.

The etic explanation provides a second and scientific mechanism through which the condition of a person who has malaria can develop into cerebral malaria. Cerebral malaria can also occur as a result of invasion, by the *Plasmodium* parasites, of the brain. These parasites block blood vessels in the brain causing patients to go into coma.

There are many explanations given by lay people to account for malaria causation. Despite the variations in these explanations, in the case of cerebral malaria, it is clear from the folk accounts that the locus of activities that lead to cerebral malaria is in the brain. The problem may start elsewhere in the body or even outside the body, but eventually affect the brain. In the case of Gusii, lay people see malaria as a result of mosquito bites. This is in agreement with the western health care model. Among the Gusii, malaria may also be caused through contagion - eating of sugary foods, or through other agents that enter the victim and which may be expelled using emetics.

The three Gusii accounts of malaria causation exemplify the indigenous contagion theory (ICT) (Green 1999). According to Green, ICT contains three related types of etiologic beliefs. These are naturalistic infection or the folk germ theory, mystical contagion (often referred to as pollution), and environmental dangers. In the analysis of Gusii beliefs of malaria causation, both the naturalistic infection aspects and environmental dangers are evident.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study have implications on the long-term malaria control programs in Gusii and in other areas where malaria is spreading to areas formerly considered low risk. Lay people in Gusii have a multiple causal theory of malaria. The association of sugary foods with malaria may induce lay people to avoid use of sugar coated malaria drugs and syrups leading to greater rates of non-compliant behaviour. Although it has been established that in some areas, due to the bitter taste of the malaria drugs, patients avoid using them (Helitzer-Allen et al. 1994), the Gusii data points otherwise. Over one half of the informants in Gusii link sugary foods with malaria. This association has important implications on the malaria control efforts.

Similarly, the belief, held by some people, that witchcraft may cause malaria can negatively influence the utilization of health care facilities or self-treatment with over-the-counter malaria drugs. Instead, patients may seek treatment from “experts” thought to have powers over witches. Due to widespread drug-resistant malaria, patients may interpret this to be the result

of actions by ill-intentioned people and they may modify their health-seeking behaviour to conform to those interpretations.

Lay people in different areas and from different cultural backgrounds have various interpretations regarding their suffering. Therefore, malaria control programs should be area/region specific; taking into account people's own locally derived folk theories about the cause of malaria. Although these models may lack a scientifically derived basis, they do affect patient compliance and, eventually, treatment outcome. For example, lay people may exclude sugar-coated malaria drugs and syrups that are given to children from the drug regimen even when a doctor has prescribed it because they associate the sweetness with malaria. The children, who are usually given syrups, thus end up being denied proper medication because the caretakers fear worsening the existing condition by the very action meant to bring relieve to the patient.

Thus, the malaria campaign programs should incorporate folk theories which enhance the anti-malaria campaigns. By incorporating such theories, in as far as they are relevant; it may be possible to increase patient compliance with the treatment regimen. In cases where the folk theories do not agree with the proven positions, then malaria campaign programs should explain to lay people why their theories are non-contributory to the overall malaria situation. Consequently, area specific campaign programs, by making tailored contribution to the malaria situation, should lead to greater success in the global malaria control activities.

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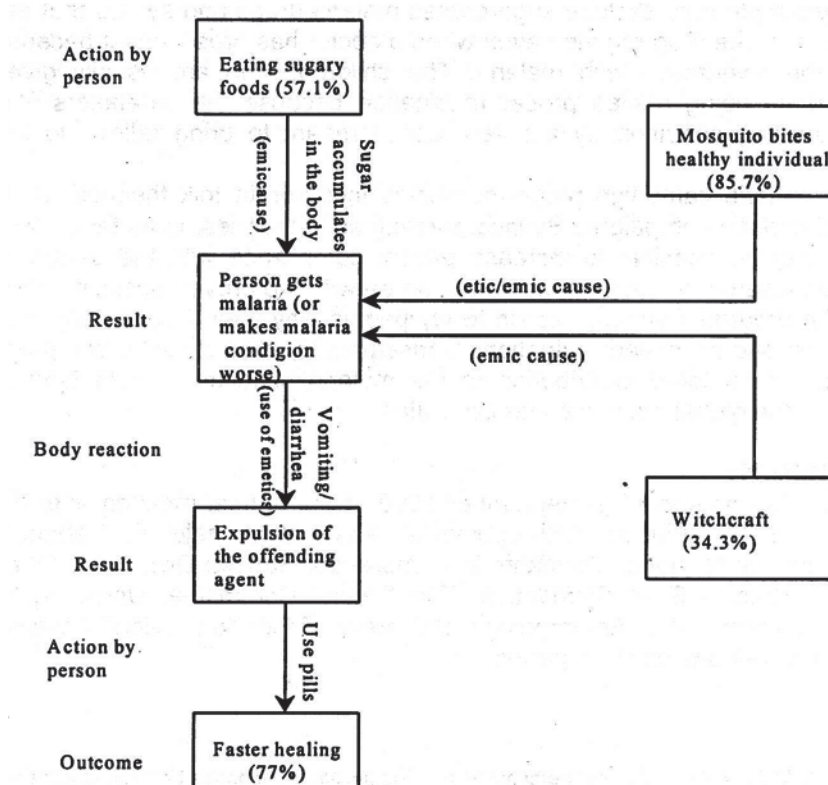
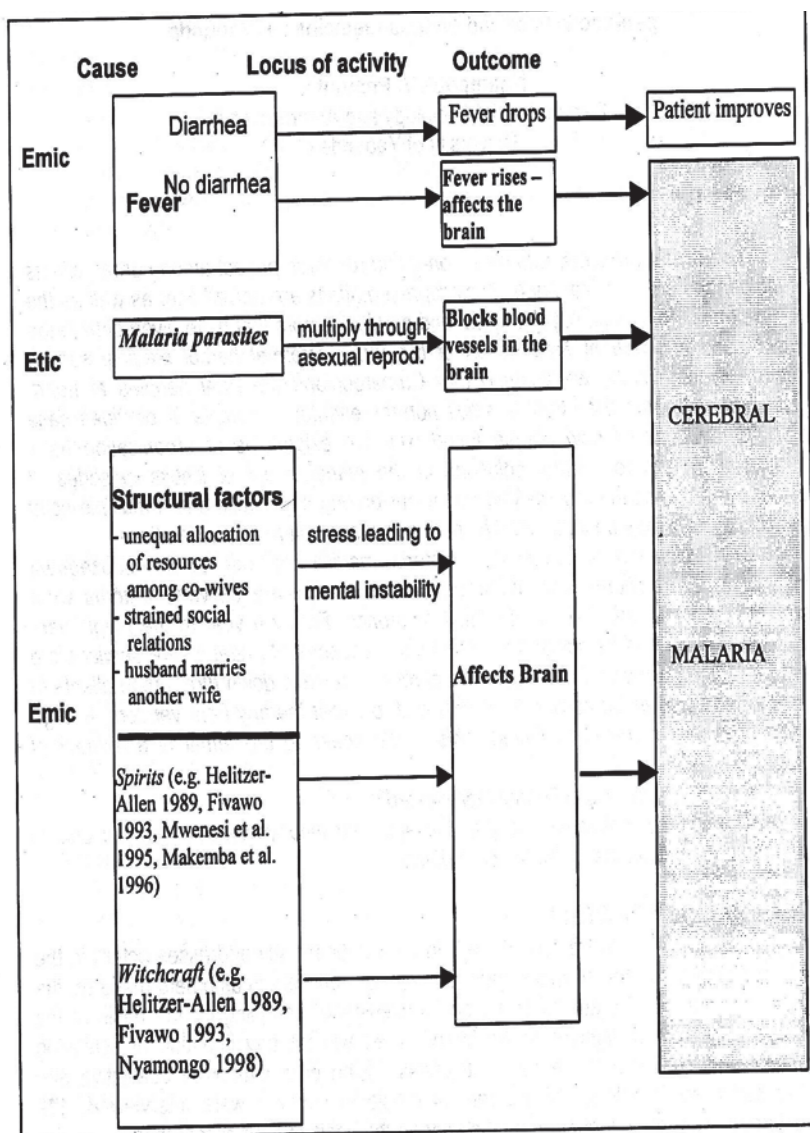


Figure I: A folk model of malaria causation and treatment in Bomorenda (% is proportion of people responding, N=35)





**Figure 2: Etic/emic model of cerebral malaria (based on Gusii data and other studies)**

**Table 1: What people say about malaria and vomiting**

|   | GENDER |      |    |
|---|--------|------|----|
|   | Female | Male |    |
| 0 | 3      | 5    | 8  |
| 1 | 15     | 12   | 27 |
|   | 18     | 17   | 35 |

Response level 1 = if one reports that vomiting or diarrhoea leads to faster healing, 0 = if one reports otherwise





## The social and cultural aspects of health care delivery: a case study of clients' perspectives on indigenous medicines in Yaoundé

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### Abstract

*This article presents data on an on-going research project among urban clients of indigenous drugs in Yaoundé. Their representations are delved into, as well as the complex chain of social, psychological and medical factors that have given birth to the growth and subsequent proliferation of the urban informal herbal medical service sector. Hypothetically, we assume that Cameroonians are rural peoples at heart. Using ethnographic data from a small non-representative sample, it provides case study illustrations of how people faced with the exigencies of urbanization have continued to turn to cultural solutions in the management of illness episodes. It discusses how health-care-seeking behaviour among city dwellers in a multiple-point medical system may be influenced by both social and cultural considerations. The utilization of indigenous material medical as well as the subsequent integration of traditional and modern drugs in health care delivery systems were cardinal issues at the 1978 Alma Ata Conference. Barely a year to the magic year 2000, equity as well as social and economic accessibility to health care services are still far-fetched dreams. In the face of a chronic economic downturn, urban clients of African medicine in Cameroon have resorted to street therapy from vendors, a large majority of whom are not initiated. This article seeks to problematize a number of issues: How this activity is culturally represented? The client's motivation, despite the apparent inconveniences involved and to pinpoint the implications for health care delivery.*

### Methodology Of Study

This study of the traditional medicine street pharmacy addresses actors in the informal service sector. In this regard, the vendors and their customers make up the target population. The survey relied on "convenience" sampling on the basis of the accessibility and willingness of the interviewees without any intention of achieving randomness or statistical representativeness. Using

complementary qualitative and quantitative methodology, 78 indigenous medicine vendors were interviewed, 179 customers were questionnaired on the spot on the basis of their acceptance.

### **Vendors' and client's socio-demographic profile**

The clients of the indigenous medicine service sector have been recruited from all the social and professional classes of the urban society. They are men and women of various ages and religious backgrounds. Of the 78 vendors we interviewed on the basis of their accessibility and acceptance, 79, 5% were men, whereas only a meagre 20, 5% of the study population were women. Consumers who are defined from the person we met procuring a service or product were predominantly men (60.9 %) of our sample of 179, whereas only 70 (39.1 %) were women.

Most of the clients claimed to be of Christian background (53.6 %), 31.8 % of being Muslim, whereas 14.6 % claimed to be animists. This finding turns to suggest that Christianity is marginal. Most city dwellers are rural peoples at heart. There is the concomitant practice of African traditional religions and Christianity with the former reflected by the wearing of outward paraphernalia like medals and other objects (Titi Nwel, 1996). Religious background may not always influence health-seeking behaviour at least from the findings of this study. Kenneth Little (1966: 78) has expressed the view that:

*There are, however, considerable differences in the extent to which particular peoples and ethnic groups have given up their former habits. Indeed, in most cases, it occurs that the African individual moving out of the tribal area continues to be influenced by tribal culture (Kenneth Little, 1966: 78).*

Religious affiliation therefore hardly uproots people from their ancient beliefs and practices. This may even be justified by the existence of syncretic cults that combine and blend the elements of different cultures and religions together. This does not depend on the degree of educational attainment. By academic background, we realized that 37.4 % of the clients have rudimentary primary school education, whereas 31.2 % have secondary school education 16.4 % have university level education whereas 15 % have never been to school. Next we turn to the vendor and client's cognitive views about traditional drugs.

## Knowledge of indigenous drugs

We realized that 57.7 % of indigenous medicine vendors were uninitiated, 32 % claim to have acquired their knowledge through inheritance, 2.6 % from the Koran, 1.3 % from dreams and 6.4 % through formal education. Urban clients claim they have acquired their knowledge of phytotherapy from their social networks, early socialization, the reading of books on natural medicines, from syncretic religious sects and, on rare occasions, when a dead ancestor comes in the course of a dream and prescribe natural materials for the management of a given sickness episode. How this activity is represented culturally will be our next preoccupation.

## Cultural representations

The informal street pharmacy in general has been at the centre of scholarly attention and designation by scholars like Van der Geest, (1982) Mwabu, (1984), Foster, (1990). In the panoply of ethnographic literature, these scholars have churned out, the vendors are variously referred to as “unauthorized drug vendors”, “street pharmacists”, “mobile doctors” and their medicines as “over-the-counter drugs”. These representations are relative and limited to conventional medicine vendors.

*Pharmacie qui “traitent” les maladies deoessen: la medecine moderne* “pharmacy that treats ailments that are above modern medicine”. This epithet expressly categorizes illnesses and associates to them a division-of-labour component. It explicitly categorizes illnesses between traditional and modern medicine. In the same vein, this pharmacy plays the double role of selling and of therapy. It attributes to both categories of medicines, a particular domain but spells out the role of indigenous medicine as being holistic, capable of treating its own ailments and cases that are assumed to be above conventional drugs. Informants claimed that the rise of traditional medicine was due to the failure of modern medicine in the management of certain illness episodes. This designation implicitly assumes that both systems of medicine are complementary but points out squarely that native medicine are a safety valve, a sort of fire brigade once modern medicine has proven to be inefficient.

*Pharmacie naturelle, Lebo-Hettx:* (Natural medicine pharmacy), Herbal pharmacy). These representations imply that therapy is performed with the use of natural elements such as the parts of plants (barks of trees, saps, herbs, leaves, roots, fruits, bulbs, mineral salt and animal materials, bones, hair and blood among others. Natural implies that the products are being used in their original form; they have not been subjected to binder and dye as preservatives.

*Pharmacie indigene* (indigenous medicine pharmacy). Traditional medicine is being identified here with indigenous wisdom and the product of such a science. This cultural trade mark and identity distinguishes it from the so-called scientific medicine. Indigenous is tantamount to saying that knowledge about it has been transmitted from one generation to the other through oral repetition (although some ethno medical systems have been documented) and has thus been experimented and proven to be of therapeutic utility.

Synonymous with the indigenous medicine pharmacy and charged with the same cultural undertones are expressions such as *pharmacie Africaine*, *pharmacie des noires* (The African's pharmacy, the black man's pharmacy.) These expressions are symbolic of cultural identity since they are products of the African cultural environment.

*Pharmacie des pauvres*. "poor man's pharmacy". This advertisement poster categorizes people in terms of their social status and therefore their health-seeking behaviour. It suggests that herbal medicine is less expensive, unlike orthodox medicines which the rich go for. Contrary to the rich and affluent, the poor go to the indigenous medicine pharmacy where they are offered help. Most vendors claimed that they were out to help the poor and not to sell. This signpost aims at luring people, since price plays a determinant role in health-seeking behaviour.

*Pharmacie traditionnelle, moderne*. "Modern traditional medicine pharmacy". The traditional material medical in this pharmacy is bottled or packaged in sachets well ahead of time. This suggests an element of novelty in indigenous medical practice. But it strictly remains traditional medicine despite the container in which it is found.

## **Client's representation and motivations**

Customers are not unanimous as to the level of appreciation of street traditional medicine. 32.4 % of respondents said that it is efficient against certain diseases like madness, leprosy, yellow fever and the list is inexhaustive; another 32.4 % responded it is efficient only at times; 16.3 % disqualified its efficacy altogether, whereas 18.9 % had virtually no opinion on the therapeutic efficacy of indigenous medicine. The level of appreciation is relative and may be influenced by psychological factors. Efficiency seems to depend very much on what people say about a particular herb. But what social and cultural factors have given rise to the informal traditional medicine service sector despite the inconveniences of this open air-street therapy?

Through ethnographic interviews, we discovered that it is a multi-factorial phenomenon. From the dual standpoint of the vendors and their clients, they

are partially economical. On the one hand, urbanites have resorted to a division of labour in terms of health-seeking behaviour from the point of view of disease aetiology. At the same time, individual psychology about recovery and the impact of early socialization has given rise to the growth of urban traditional medicine. Other factors are the presumed negative side effects of pharmaceuticals as well as the influence of social tensions in urban areas. Let us address these factors in greater detail.

### **Economic factors**

The economic down-turn of the late 1980s and 1990s has had an impact on health care delivery, 18.4 % of our respondents pointed out that they buy traditional medicine because it is less expensive as compared to western pharmaceuticals. The economic crisis alongside the double salary cuts in Cameroon and devaluation have affected health-seeking behaviour tremendously. The prices of essential drugs rose by 50 %, and 64 % for other pharmaceutical products. This rise led to changes in health seeking behaviour. This response, however, depends on several other factors one of which is the perception of the disease aetiology.

### **The categorisation of diseases**

Common ailments like malaria and venereal diseases are held to be better treated by indigenous medicines. Since the recourse is usually zigzag, we may assume that there is usually non-compliance with instructions regarding drug administration whose root cause is poverty. Some start with over-the-counter drugs usually in small quantities. When the expected outcome does not follow immediately, there is recourse to herbal medicines or vice versa.

Forster and Anderson (1978) have pointed out that lay people's therapeutic choices are partly determined through the recognition of the disease symptoms and its perception in relation to other illnesses. According to our informants, when one takes an antidote against poison, (s)he can vomit it out immediately. S(he) might equally be scarified and the poison comes out instantaneously. Infertility, septic wounds, caused by witchcraft commonly referred to as *moussong*, sexual impotence, and menstrual pains are held to be the exclusive reserve of indigenous medicine.

Several authors have come to the same conclusion in various regions of Africa. See for instance, the works of Spring (1980) in Zambia, Nyamwaya, (1981), and Fivawo, (1993) in Tanzania, in his study of response to malaria, Helitzer - Allen (1989) in Malawi.

Spring (1980) has for instance reported that the Luvala of Zambia reserve madness, bareness, postpartum weakness and a good number of other ailments for traditional medicine. whereas Nyamwaya (1981) drawing ethnographic inspiration from his research findings among the Kelyo and the Marakwet of Kenya point out that infantile diarrhoea, female infertility, the trephining of fractured skulls and mental ailments are better handled by indigenous medicine unlike obstetric cases, trachoma, acute respiratory infections, fevers and accidents that belong to modern medicine, where to refer a particular illness episode is culturally defined and may depend on both psychological factors as well as the impact of socialization.

### **Psychological factors and the impact of socialization**

Some patients pointed out that they knew about various medicinal plants from their villages. This therefore suggests the imprints of early socialization. They have been socialized to believe that only particular herbs can offer relief against particular ailments. This tends to show the emic dimension of the perception between cause, diagnosis and prognosis which when afflicted by a similar illness tends to influence the way individuals or families respond to a particular episode.

Some informants said that they were buying indigenous medicines partly because they had successfully cured a previous illness; while others said “A” had successfully used it for the same disease. A’s success seems to have inspired confidence for that particular herb or for herbal concoctions in general.

This finding ties in with George M. Foster’s (1975) stance that:

*The fact remains that no scientific medical system completely satisfies a/l (the) health needs of a nation. Even in countries with highly developed health care systems, many people, under certain conditions, will turn to non-established forms of medical help such as faith healers, herbal doctors and the like. “Alternate” forms of medical care fill social, psychological and perhaps organic health needs which, at least for some people, remain unmet by physicians and associated health care services. George M. Foster’s (1975).*

A combination of factors underlies therapeutic decision-making and choice. It may as well happen that by pure chance, an individual is successfully treated by a particular traditional medicament or by a certain type of health service. Even if he shuttled before coming to that, he will refer himself to it in the face of another illness because it treated an earlier one. This also applies



same to families. Our sample showed that of the 179 informants, some 49.7% had resorted to the purchase of medicinal herbs because of personal experience. Personal experience may be rooted in socio-cultural considerations.

### **Socio-cultural considerations**

From ethnographic interviews with various informants, we deduced that social and cultural considerations have equally motivated the growth of the traditional medicine pharmacy in our ethnographic setting.

When most men came to the vendors for drugs on venereal diseases and met women around, they beckoned on the vendors. Once the vendor came and both were out of earshot, they laid their complains. The vendor then returned, packaged and took the concoction to him, gave instructions with regards to the preparation of the concoction, received the cost price and returned. At times the customer will linger around until the woman goes away.

Several of the informants we talked to claimed that when they go to hospitals for consultations, the procedure is not only long and tedious but socially and financially expensive.

For one thing, they have to wait lengthily at an overcrowded but understaffed health care unit, which may be manned by the “wrong” type of health workers. One of these inconveniences is the fact that you have to divulge your identity (age, name and type of disease) to be written down. Confidentiality is therefore not guaranteed.

At times in Mission health care units especially, there is always a female nurse (sister) on duty. The men pointed out that they do not feel comfortable with her especially when the disease has to do with the sexual organs. At times, as it usually comes to pass, she may insist that the patient show his private part to her especially with regards to rashes, syphilis or gonorrhoea, or other diseases of the urinary tract and sexual organs, respectively.

After this lengthy protocol then follows the prescription of a long list of drugs.

Looking at the quantity of prescribed drugs, some informants argue that over prescription is because medics and paramedical staff alike are not very sure of themselves. They are merely gambling with the hope that if drug “A” does not work, “B” will do the trick. Drug prescription practices have been a menu in the ethnographic literatures. See for instance Velasquez, (1983), Hardon et al. (1995), in this domain.

The finding of convenience and confidentiality lends credence to one of our initial hypotheses that access to the indigenous medicine pharmacy is

socially, and culturally free of charge. Confidentiality is maintained as much as possible. Some people therefore resort to auto medication partly because of the foregoing motives and to avoid what to them seems to be an embarrassment.

Religious background does not seem to be an impediment. Customers of the Born Again Religious inclination buying these traditional drugs termed them natural medicine. They hold that these self-presumed traditional healers are mere vendors and not what the vendor-healers claim to be. They said that God made these plants for man to treat himself with. They were unanimous in attributing ill-health to the violation of the moral order laid down by God.

A few patients however pointed out that they bought the medicine just to maximize their chances of getting well or recovering quickly. We came across two men buying traditional material medical but having each in a package and at the same time modern medicines bought from a nearby pharmacy for the treatment of cough. They expressed the opinion that each system of medicine had a part to play in their recovery and that they wanted to reinforce the treatment and therefore maximise their chances of recovery.

From our interviews with urban tradi-practitioners, they confirmed this shuttling recourse between modern and traditional medicine. A few of them in both Douala and Yaoundé boasted that they were well known at the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences of the University of Yaoundé I formerly called CUSS. A female part-time medical anthropology lecturer once told us in class how she had withdrawn her husband from the then CUSS teaching hospital when a prominent staff member there sent her a nurse to propose the services of a tradipractitioner. The cost was not only considered exorbitant but she felt that modern medicine could do the trick.

Judging by her social standing, she felt they wanted to dupe her. Her hubby when taken to another hospital recovered. What may be deduced from these instances is that: Urban folks classify diseases and although because of professional reasons usually the zeal to ask for the payment of a sick insurance allowance thereafter from their employers or to justify their absence from work, they pretend to be following biomedicine while simultaneously receiving indigenous therapy to satisfy their psychology and their masters.

Secondly the shuttle shows that they are caught between tradition and modernity as they will want to maximize the chances of recovery. What matters is that they should be restored back to health and not the institution that achieves this primordial goal.

Illness episodes from this shuttling recourse may be said to have a division of labour component. Implicit here is the complementarity of roles between the Western styled bio medic and the traditional healer. The nature of the

relation or collaboration between the two systems of medicine has been dealt with by the likes of Last, (1986).

A biomedical practitioner told me how his own medicine failed to treat his impotence. But a tradipractitioner-vendor treated him. What this implies is two-fold. On the one hand, no system of medicine can handle all the health problems of a given population. On the other hand, it shows that Africans no matter their level of education are rural peoples at heart. Yet these medicines in some contexts were considered to be food.

### **The nutritional dimension of traditional medicine**

Vendors selling in traditional medicine pharmacies and those who claim to be researchers in herbal medicines are unanimous that their drugs unlike conventional medicines are wholesome. They point out that it goes beyond curing or preventing diseases to provide nutrients for the repair of body tissues. Nutrients which they cited include: proteins, minerals, vitamins, hormones that are needed in times of poor health to catalyse recovery among others.

This seems to be largely true as some of the traditional medicine pharmacists selling barks of trees pointed out that some were condiments. One woman whom I observed buying a medicinal plant (as I came to interview the vendor in that capacity), when asked just after the purchase why she bought traditional medicine, she waved me aside, laughed and commented that it was meant for her sauce. A single herb as earlier pointed out has several usages. Yet other people complained that chemotherapy destroys their organisms.

### **The negative side effects of modern medicine**

Most respondents complained that conventional medicines have a lot of negative side effects on them. Certain individuals are allergic to anti-malaria drugs like Nivaquine, Flavoquine, Maladrine and Capquine, The drugs are said to be toxic and poisonous because of the chemicals used in their preparation. Informants from the medical corps corroborated them insinuating that chemotherapy stays long in the human organism. This is not the case with traditional herbal concoctions which are sent out through excretion. 41.3 % of patients claimed they bought them because the medicines they were non-toxic.

Nevertheless, those who follow two therapeutic regimes at the same time hold that they do so to reinforce the other. This, according to them, is because chemotherapy although produced from traditional herbs is held to be weaker.

The dye and binder this view maintains reduces the power as well as the therapeutic properties in them.

One other inconvenience with conventional medicine they pointed out is that it is too constraining. Herbal medicines on the other hand can be discontinued due to forgetfulness and resumed the next day with virtually no problems. Western medicine on the other hand fails to produce any desirable and expected effects if prescription, storage and administration procedure are not complied with *stricto sensu*.

In addition to this, some customers pointed out that traditional medicine does not prohibit the consumption of alcohol. They pointed out that some traditional medicine recipes are concocted for consumption using palm wine, dry gin and fermented corn beer locally called *shaab*. What they imply is that one can continue to enjoy his or herself while undergoing treatment. This is not the case with the Whiteman's medicine. Nevertheless, there are forbidden pleasures like sexual intercourse, when using certain traditional medicaments.

There is, however, mounting research evidence that the inefficacy of chemotherapy against certain diseases is due to the unorthodox practices and the tacit violation of laid-down regulations that characterize the production and distribution of pharmaceuticals sent to countries of the Less Developed World.

Velasquez (1983: 32-33) has pointed out that the Western pharmaceutical industry exports to countries that depend on the West for their supplies, easily perishable, dangerous and outdated pharmaceutical products. On his part, Fayasuriya, (1992: 3) opines that in drug production Worldwide, standard pharmaceutical practices and norms are never complied with when they are being put into the market.

There is in fact, a preponderance of low-quality drugs in developing countries because of the high prices of pharmaceuticals and to complicate issues, Anita Hardon et al., (1995: 1) have reasoned that:

*Since the 1980s, many publications have pointed to the medically unsafe use of Western pharmaceuticals in developing countries where regulations are weak and health care systems do not function well. People not only use modern pharmaceuticals on the advice of doctors, but a large proportion of illness cases is self-medicated, with potentially hazardous prescription-only drugs". Hardon et al (1995: 1)*

The foregoing studies make clear the fact that the negative side effects of pharmaceuticals can be attributed partly to non-conformity. This may even partly explain why some people prefer herbal medicine as well as the influence of social tensions in towns.

## The influence of social tensions

Urban centres are fraught with social tensions. Disease finds its origins in the living and working conditions of people in a given socio-cultural setting. Although relations in urban centres are impersonal, they are at the same time conflictual. This partly explains why some people wear personal charms like medalia, hang them in their houses, wear rings and bracelets, amulets, necklaces, girdles, and many other decorations which have both magical as well as ornamental purposes.

According to Geoffrey Parrinder, (1976: 64), such objects are supposed to ward off evil spirits and disease. In the same light, bundles of feathers are put in sticks in fields or laid on stone piles as safeguards against thieves and blight. Some people carry on themselves the barks of certain trees to influence top authorities or events like Court cases in their favour. Some want more love from their partners and so go in for a love potion, to that effect. Peter Geschiere (1995) has made references to cases and football matches in the East province of Cameroon, in the same light where mystical powers are used.

With competition at places of employment particularly in townships, people are ready to eliminate their enemies by mystical force. This therefore calls for various protective mechanisms. Health is essentially adaptation in a given environment (Mead, 1977)

The rise of the urban traditional medicine pharmacopeia in the face of the foregoing shows that disease symptomatology has to be looked for in the material and immaterial worlds. Geoffrey (Parrider, 1967:65) has observed that:

*Many markets contain the ingredients which customers are asked to bring for a magical preparation: porcupine quills, red parrot feathers, dried bats, dried rats, snake skin and all manner of leaves and roots. The expert prepares these to make them effective. Geoffrey Parrider, (1967:65)*

Let us briefly take a look at a particular case study that seems to capture some of the above factors before examining the implications for health care delivery.

### Case Study

Miss Nahbu Rosali is a graduate student from the National Institute of Youth and Sports, Yaoundé. She is twenty-six (26) years old. Hear her:

*I had gastritis. A friend of mine told me to go and buy Swedish Bitters for 1,500. frs from Dr. Daewa because according to her there is no medical medicine for gastric.*

*She told me that the medicine is bitter, sawa "sour" and sweet at the same time. Immediately it enters your mouth, you start feeling as if you want to die. This is because of the bitter taste.*

*However, when I came here at the time, (in front of the Score Super Market), they did not give me the right medicine. They gave me another drug which was like Swedish Bitters. Afterwards, a neighbour came and told me it was not the right medicine. (Discussion of 18/10/1988).*

Two months after, we spoke to Miss Nahbu Rosali, at her home in the students' residential area at-Ngoa-Ekelle in a bid to find out if she was getting better after taking the traditional medicine recipe:

*Anyhow, I am feeling better now, but I don't know if it is because of the Swedish Bitters. I was taking it alongside milk and unboiled groundnuts. I equally stopped doing sports for some time, since people usually think it is because of the sports we do but this is not the case. Others say I starve. I neither starve, drink nor smoke. We have been told that if you do sports when you have heart problems, cardiac, lungs and all those things (diseases) sports is going to make you feel better.*

*When we wrestled, I was heavily thrown down by my opponent who got me well beaten. I took an X-ray at CUSS and realized I was quite well. A few weeks after, I started feeling chest pains, people said it was gastritis.*

## **The Implications For Health Care Delivery In Africa**

As the PHC decades come to an end in under a year, this study articulates and mirrors some of the problems of the African health care systems, in general, and the Cameroonian ethnographic setting, in particular, as well as the necessity for social science application in the delivery of health services.

At a general level, one may say that, there should be the personalization of hospital care so as to bridge the social distance between those delivering health care (medical staff, Traditional Birth Attendants, doctors), on the one hand, and their patients, on the other. Paramedical staff should learn to treat patients with care because their behaviour has implications for the patient's recovery.

The social and cultural dimensions of therapy should be introduced in medical and paramedical schools through the teaching of disciplines such as medical anthropology, sociology and psychology. In the same vein, traditional medicine courses should be introduced and taught in these institutions. This

will permit anyone wishing to become a traditional healer to take courses there and will allow for uniformity in curriculum and therefore of training.

As a matter of fact, the cultural dimension of therapy must be taken into consideration by health care providers. They need knowledge of the culture of their audience (the emic dimension of their patients) for the aetiology of diseases. Foreign trained medics must understand the psychology and sociology of the people they are dealing with because most diseases have a cultural context.

Specifically, policy around indigenous medicine in Africa should be centred around some of the following:

- From our finding that a majority of these vendors are uninitiated, we may talk of the need for regulatory mechanisms, for the protection, control and licensing so as to improve upon the quality of care. The hygienic conditions under which they operate leave much to be desired.

- Traditional healers in practice all over the national territory need to be identified and their specialization established. In other words, we need to know which diseases a healer is capable of curing, how efficient he can do it, the risk factors and the side effects and above all the dosage to be administered.

- Research Institutes should be created so as to undertake the chemical analysis of various plant drugs which have been culturally defined to be effective. They need to determine the therapeutic efficacy and spectrum they can cure, the possible risk factors such as the degree of toxicity and whether the plant is poisonous or not and of course the dosage to be administered. It is time to embrace scientific and technological innovations that can professionalize traditional medical practice.

- Since medicinal herbs are threatened by population pressure, destruction through indiscriminate harvesting and foreign export, there will be the need for their protection, enhancement and subsequent development beginning with an enabling environment through legislation.

There is need to create a school of traditional medicine where traditional healers will be trained using a clearly defined organizational framework within which they will later operate. Research in these institutions should target the production and subsequent dissemination of ethnographic monographs in various national cultures so as to constitute an inventory for the national pharmacopoeia.

Above all, there will be need for an official health care policy in Cameroon like in most African countries, with regard to traditional medicine. The



creation of cultural medicine associations alone does not give indigenous medical practice a legal status.

## Conclusion

The transposition of traditional material medical on our streets and the recourse to it has been part and parcel of urban health care coverage since economic and social inaccessibility to drugs has made health for all by the year 2000 a seemingly unrealistic dream, since people are still dying of common ailments in great numbers. Health for all beyond the year 2000 must be based on the integration of modern and indigenous health care services. The institutional framework must be seriously addressed and traditional medicine given a legal status like in Burkina Faso and a few other African countries. The Chinese success story can be relied upon.

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## **Focus on the World Bank Safeguard Policies and the Chad-Cameroon Oil and Pipeline Projects**

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### **Introduction**

Today at the eve of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the Third Millennium, there is no more doubt as to the usefulness, and importance of anthropology in the development process of mankind in general, and the rural population in particular. Anthropology, especially socio-cultural anthropology is potentially a basic instrument in the project development process in rural areas, as it can help bring out the background knowledge needed for an accurate and adequate identification, preparation and implementation of all types of projects. But the questions that arise are:

Are the different development actors aware of this decisive role that anthropology can play? Do they use Anthropology? If yes, do they use it the way they should? If no, why? When and how should anthropology and anthropologists interfere in a project cycle?

These are a few questions we will try to answer all along this presentation, basing on our own experience and more especially on the World Bank Safeguard Policies and the Chad-Cameroon Oil and Pipeline Projects. In the course of our discussions, we will have to link the problem of the involvement of anthropologists that of NGOs, Associations, indigenous peoples and other stakeholders.

### **I. Use and Misuse of Anthropology**

Let us begin by pointing out that there is now a brand new consensus in the development committee that most rural development and natural resource management projects in Africa have failed, or have followed with limited successes. Why? One of the reasons is certainly the lack of anthropological knowledge or the ignorance of anthropological studies on the populations living in the areas where those projects were carried out. During the engineering phase of projects, technical, economical and other studies are completed; technical, economical and other studies are completed; but no

anthropological surveys are conducted that would have enlightened the project managers on the cultural habits and features of the population: mentality, social structure, food, dress, technology, relationships and nature and other creatures. etc.

That had been the case during colonial periods and even after independence. For a long time, Government and Administrative authorities have been the sole development policy-makers and field actors, and the tendency was -and is-so to say, to force development onto indigenous peoples, i.e. to impose not only the projects, but also the priorities, the objectives, the timing, etc. They had no word to say, and there was no attempt to respect the social and cultural differences or identity. Hence, their reluctance, their passivity, and in some places, their hostility leading to open conflicts with public authorities or project institutions. In Papua, New Guinea, for instance, as a participant revealed during a seminar in Ceusgo, Peru in 1997, the indigenous peoples are so traumatized by imposed development projects. That in the word 'development', they only see the first two syllables and call it 'Devil'...

For more than two decades, foreign and international institutions have joined the government in designing and implementing development projects. But as it seems, they do not give much room to anthropology. Like the government in most cases, they fail to study and take into consideration the anthropological realities of each specific project setting, which in some cases leads to the total collapse of the whole process.

To take an example, how far are they with the FIMAC Project in Cameroon? Nobody talks of it anymore. Many people took loans but very few reimbursed. Had there been any appropriate anthropological survey before the launching of the project, to determine for example, in which areas it could be successful and in which areas it could not? To take another example, the Scan Water Project is also an experience. As it was planned, the local population in each village was supposed to take over after the water pumps were built, and manage them by themselves. But almost all the villages failed. Managing water pumps was not in their habits. If consulted, cultural anthropologists would surely have helped...

Today, there are many local, national and international NGOs operating in various sectors in Cameroon. But apart from a few international ones, who else can afford paying an anthropologist for a socio-cultural survey in an area where a project is going to be carried out? But in actual fact, it is not a question of money. It is much more a question of sensitization and information. NGO managers need to be aware of the important role that anthropology and anthropologists can play in the different stages of project

development. They need to be informed and shown how anthropological data can contribute to a more efficient preparation and implementation of their projects. And that is, I believe, one of the objectives of the present session in the present conference.

Yes, anthropology is scarcely used, sometimes misused and often used by governmental and Non-Governmental Institutions. But when and how should anthropologists be involved in a project cycle?

## **II. Project Cycle Of world Bank Projects**

### **Stages of Cycle**

#### **1) Identification**

##### Activities:

The borrower/WB implies:

- Sources of Project idea
- The sectorial works of the World Bank
- Current Projects
- Other Institutions

Comment: The possibility of involuntary resettlement should be determined as early as possible and described in all project documents.

#### **2) Preparation**

##### Activities:

\* Technical Assistance “Borrower

\*Bank

\*Others

\*EIA

\*Resettlement plan for population

##### Comment:

During project preparation, the feasibility of resettlement must be established, a strategy agreed upon the resettlement plan drafted.

#### **3) Appraisal**

##### Activities:

It's the World Bank responsibility

\*Economic

\*Technical

\*Institutional

\*Financial

\*Environmental, social and ecological

#### **4) Negotiations**

##### Activities:

\*Bank the Borrower:

The borrower revised final document

\*Accord and conditions of the credit.

##### Comment:

that the requirements have been met, that involuntary resettlement and hardship will be minimized.

#### **5) Implementation/Supervision**

##### Activities:

Credit granted to borrower, supervision by the Bank

#### **6) Ex-Post Evaluation**

##### Activities:

Implies to World Bank/Borrower.

### **Indigenous Peoples “Peuples Autochtones”**

#### **Definition**

Indigenous peoples are a group with a social and cultural identity distinct from that of the dominant society that makes them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the development process. Indigenous peoples can be identified in particular geographical areas by the presence in varying degrees of the following characteristics:

- A) a close attachment to ancestral territories and to the natural resources in these areas.
- b) Self-identification and identification by others as members of a distinct cultural group.
- c) An indigenous language, often different from the national language.

How to approach peoples affected by development projects is a controversial issue. Debate is often phrased as a choice between two opposed positions. One pole insulates those indigenous populations whose cultural and economic practices make it difficult for them to deal with powerful outside groups. The advantages of this approach are the special protections that are



provided and the preservations of cultural distinctiveness; the cost is the benefit forgone from development programs.

The other pole argues that indigenous people must be acculturated to dominate societal values and economic activities so that they can participate in national development. Here, the benefit can include improved social and economic opportunities, but the cost is often the gradual loss of cultural differences.

### **Indigenous peoples' development plan**

#### Fundamental Points:

- a) The preparation of a culturally appropriate development plan based on full consideration of the options preferred by the affected people by the project.
- b) The institutions responsible for government interactions should normally involve appropriate existing institutions, local organizations, and NGOs with expertise in matters relating to indigenous peoples.

Local patterns of social organizations and, religious benefits should be taken into account

#### Content of such a plan:

- a) Legal Framework
- b) Baseline data
- c) Land Tenure
- d) Strategy for local Participation
- e) Mitigatory Activity
- f) Institutional Capacity
- g) Implementation schedule
- h) Monitoring and Evaluation

#### Indigenous Peoples and the Project Cycle:

- 1) Identification
- 2) Preparation
- 3) Appraisal, Evaluation, Implementation, Supervision.

### **Environmental Assessments**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of environmental assessment is to improve decision-making and to ensure that the project options under consideration are environmentally

sound and sustainable. All environmental consequences should be recognized early in the project cycle and taken into account. Environmental assessments also provide a formal mechanism for inter-agency cooperation on environmental issues and for addressing the concerns of affected groups and local NGOs. Environmental assessment also plays an important role in a country.

**Involvement in Affected Groups and NGOs**

The bank expects the borrower (contractor) to take the views of affected groups and local NGOs fully into account in project design and implementation and also in the preparation of environmental assessments.

This process is important in order to understand both the nature and extent of any social and environmental impact and the acceptability or proposed mitigatory measures, particularly to the affected groups.

In order for a meaningful consultation to take place between the contractor and affected groups and local NGOs, it is necessary that the contractor provide relevant information prior to consultations. The instructions should be provided in a timely manner and in a form that is meaningful to the groups being consulted.

**Historic Evolution of Transference and Participation**

| Team in charge of studies                                                                    | Period necessary |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Engineers                                                                                    | 1930s            |
| Engineers+ Economists                                                                        | Mid-1940s        |
| Engineers+ Economists + DIE                                                                  | End of 1970s     |
| Engineers+ Economists + Environmentalists and Sociologists                                   | End of 1980s     |
| Engineers + Economist + Environmentalists + Affected populations                             | Early 1990s      |
| Engineers + Economists + Environmentalist with Affected populations+ NGOS                    | Mid-1990s        |
| Engineers + Economists + Environmentalist with Affected populations + NGOs + Public ODin ion | Early 2000       |

The approximate dates are more pertinent for developing countries. So good now that effective consideration with affected groups or with their defendants and local NGOs and the involvement of environmentalists in project conception is now an obligation in World Bank-supported projects.

## **The Evolution of Public Participation: Warning to Partnership by Using Consultation and Participation**

### **1) Before the 1950s: Warning**

Information flow was one way. Displaced and other affected groups could be informed in less than a few weeks of the impacts of a project, and that as a result of its consequences, they could leave the area or be evacuated to somewhere else.

### **2) In the 1960s: Information**

Initial participation in choice of a site; solutions for resettlements; the affected person were informed that they would be required to move and choose from a few selected sites retained by the consortium for those wishing to be resettled.

### **3) In the 1970s: Consultation**

Participation on choice of site for resettlement: consulted as regards their choice for resettlement, but

### **4) In the 1980s Concertation Effective**

The victims are consulted far in advance in a more effective manner; the views and opinions are taken into account.

### **5) In the 1991s: Obligatory Consultation**

The EA manual of the World Bank recommends effective consultation in all EA: EAs without such consultation will not be accepted. CONSU 1990s.

### **6) Consultation of Parties Concerned**

Consultation in view of resettlement evolves to the consultation of parties involved; their views are taken into consideration in all aspects not only as regards involuntary resettlement.

### **7) Participation 1992**

The World Bank recommended participation in all matters concerning Environmental Assessment.

### **8) In 1996: Published a manual on participation**

### **9) In 1997: Separated Social Assessment and Environmental Assessment.**

## **III. Cas De Projet Pipeline Tchad/Cameroun**

A la question de savoir si les concepteurs et les réalisateurs du projet pipeline Tchad-Cameroun ont respecté les directives prescrites par la Banque Mondiale dans ses politiques de sauvegarde, nous répondons d'emblée par non. Car en effet, si ces directives avaient été respectées, il y a deux ans que ce projet devait démarrer. Mais à l'heure actuelle, le doute plane encore sur la date du démarrage.

Et pour mieux comprendre le non où la mauvaise utilisation, de l'anthropologie dans la conception de ce projet, il serait indiqué pour nous de faire un bref aperçu sur sa genèse. Autrement dit, en quoi consiste le projet Pipeline Tchad-Cameroun?

Le projet pipeline est un gigantesque projet de près de 3,5 milliards de barils de pétrole pendant une période de 30 ans. Le pétrole extrait dans la région de Doba au sud du Tchad sera acheminé par un oléoduc jusqu'à la région de Kribi au Cameroun. "S'agit en fait d'un double projet:

Le projet de développement des champs pétrolières qui consistera en un forage de 300 puits au Tchad.

Le projet de construction de l'oléoduc long de 1050 km dont 170 km au Tchad et 880 km au Cameroun avec des stations de pompage, des stations de réduction de pression et des parts de stockage de matériel.

Comme partenaires dans ce mégaprojet, on a:

Le consortium forme de Esso-SHELL-ELF;

Le gouvernement camerounais;

Le gouvernement tchadien;

La Banque Mondiale.

La construction de l'oléoduc sera effectuée cote Tchad par TOTCO Tchad Oil Transportation Company).

La réalisation du projet n'aura pas seulement des impacts positifs pour chaque pays. Il y aura inévitablement des impacts négatifs. Hormis les impacts négatifs au plan écologique la construction de l'oléoduc impliquera:

Le déplacement des populations, leur réinstallation et leur réinsertion difficile notamment au Tchad.

La perte des cultures, des champs, des pâturages et des marches.

La destruction des tombes et lieux de sépulture.

La destruction et la perte des sites sacrés et de rituels.

La propagation de maladies sexuellement transmissibles telles que le VIH/SIDA.

Le projet pipeline est donc un projet classé en catégorie A par la Banque Mondiale. La mise en œuvre d'un tel projet exige au préalable une Etude d'impact Environnementale assortie d'un plan de mesure d'atténuation des impacts négatifs. Et selon les politiques de la sauvegarde du Banque Mondiale, une place de choix doit être accordée à l'Evaluation Sociale à la cour de la phase de conception du projet. Cette Evaluation Sociale qui nécessite l'engagement sur le terrain des experts chevronnés en anthropologie et en sociologie est un préalable majeur à la participation de la Banque Mondiale au projet.

Or, dans sa phase actuelle de discussion sur le projet pipeline Tchad-Cameroun, ce n'est un secret pour personne qu'il existe un blocage. Prévu pour démarrer en 1998, des incertitudes planent aujourd'hui sur la réalisation effective du projet. La Banque Mondiale devra se prononcer en Octobre sur sa participation au projet.

La question qu'on se pose serait de savoir pourquoi la Banque Mondiale, l'un des travailleurs de fond, tergiverse? La réponse à cette question se trouve dans les documents publiés par COTCO en 1998. Il s'agit des documents relatifs à l'étude d'impact Environnementale (EIE), le Plan de Gestion Environnementale (PGE) et du Plan de Compensation (PC). Dès la publication de ces documents, un réseau d'ONG camerounaises regroupées au sein d'une structure dénommée GCA (Groupe de Concertation et d'Action sur le Projet Pipeline Tchad-Cameroun) a commis une équipe d'experts multidisciplinaires parmi lesquels les anthropologues et les sociologues pour faire une analyse critique desdits documents. Certaines de ces experts sont même descendus sur le terrain.

Il ressortait de ces analyses plusieurs défaillances et plusieurs manquements par rapport aux directives et politiques de sauvegarde de la Banque Mondiale. Par exemple, au plan de l'Evaluation Sociale dans la phase de conception du projet, est-ce que le consortium a fait une étude anthropologique du milieu?

En principe, oui. En effet les documents de COTCO révèlent que le cabinet d'expertise DAMES and MOORE des Etats-Unis d'Amérique avait bien commis sur la trace du pipeline ses experts chevronnés en anthropologie et en sociologie. Mais il s'agissait 113 d'anthropologie qui n'avaient pas une grande expertise sur la culture, les us et coutumes des groupes ethniques affectés par le pipeline. Le cas de défaillances notoire signale dans les documents et le traitement réservé aux populations pygmées.

En effet, les Pygmées constituent un groupe vulnérable donc la connaissance et la maîtrise de la culture exige une assez longue période d'étude anthropologique. Or il a fallu quelque mois seulement aux anthropologues de DAMES and MOORE pour proposer qu'ils soient appelés Plan pour les Peuples Autochtones Vulnérables (PM). C'est un plan qui prévoit par exemple un budget de 25.000.000 FCFA/an pour 1000 pygmées Baka. Alors que la zone compte d'autres groupes ethniques vulnérables tels que les Ngoumba, les Bassa, les Eton et autres.

Dans ce même plan, COTCO prévoit de négocier et de compresser la destruction de l'héritage culturel des pygmées tels que les sites sacrés et de rituels, les tombes et lieux de sépulture et autres objets sacrés. Il s'agit-il des projets donc la réalisation concrète sur le terrain ne se fera pas à us heurts eu

égard à l'attachement de l'homme pygmées à sa culture ancestrale. On note ainsi un mauvais usage de l'anthropologie par les concepteurs du projet. Pour des raisons avouées, les anthropologues locaux qui maîtrisent pourtant mieux le terrain, ont été écartés au profit de leurs homologues occidentaux.

***Le concepteur a-t-il impliqué les populations locales dans la phase de conception du projet?***

On ne saurait répondre par l'affirmative. En effet dans leur document le concepteur déclare avoir consultes les populations locales depuis 1993. Mais en effet, les analyses faites par le GCA révèlent que les séances de consultations de populations ont été mal menées sur le terrain. Selon les témoignages des populations, les anthropologues n'arrivaient pas suffisamment temps les populations de leur arrivée les experts se faisaient escorter par les gendarmes et les policiers les consultations ne duraient qu'une demi-journée par village. Les brochures et autres dépliantes étaient distribués aux populations pour la plupart analphabètes.

Il s'agit encore là d'un autre cas typique du mauvais usage de l'anthropologie dans le projet pipeline.

Enfin, à la question de savoir si les ONG locales ont été consultées par le constructeur dans la phase de construction du projet?

Une fois de plus on ne saurait dire oui. Les mêmes documents de COTCO affirme que près de 150 ONG ont été consulte. Pourtant, pendant le tout premier séminaire organisé par le GCA en Aout 1998, il a été établi qu'aucune ONG témoignaient du fait que les anthropologues et sociologues de DAMES and MOORE avaient eu des entretiens d'une demi-heure avec elles au sujet d'un éventuel pipeline qui pourrait traverser le Cameroun.

Il est établi aujourd'hui que la non-implication des populations locales et des ONG, de même que le mauvais usage de l'anthropologie ont été l'origine de multiples conflits relevés sur le terrain. Ce sont ces défaillances et ces manquements qui ont créé une incertitude sur la réalisation même du projet et son renvoi inédite.

Nous continuons ainsi à penser que le projet pipeline ne pourra se réaliser avec bonheur sans l'implication d'anthropologues locaux ou mieux sans une bonne utilisation de l'anthropologie dans toutes ses dimensions.

## **Starting a Proper Life: Land Invasion and Local Government Response in Cape Town**

**John Sharp,**  
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### **Introduction**

Monwabisi Park is a new informal settlement that has come into being on the fringes of Khayelitsha, in Cape Town, in the second half of the 1990s. This paper presents the findings of a survey conducted in Monwabisi Park in late April and early May 1999. As shown below, the survey found that the residents of the settlement are mainly young people who, despite their relatively recent arrival in the city, have successfully found jobs, streamlined their domestic arrangements, and built their own houses. They arrived in Cape Town in the late 1980s or early 1990s from the impoverished Eastern Cape, and stayed with family or friends for a number of years, before striking out on their own. Monwabisi Park represents their attempt, as several put it, to ‘start a proper life’ in the city.

Yet Monwabisi Park is an illegal settlement, given that its residents have built their dwellings without permission on land that belongs to the local municipality. They are not the only ones to have done so. A recent estimate is that there are more than 70,000 shack dwellings in informal settlements throughout the Cape Metropolitan Area (see below). The proliferation of these settlements over the past decade is a consequence of an acute, and growing, shortage of formal accommodation, coupled with a rapid influx of people to the city, mainly from the Eastern Cape. Most of these settlements are illegal because, like Monwabisi Park, they are the result of land invasion. Few informal settlements are supplied with services of any kind, and their residents have no security whatever. In the case of Monwabisi Park, the municipality has spent over two years, and a considerable amount of money, attempting to evict the residents.

Using Monwabisi Park as a case study, this paper explores the gulf between people’s aspirations regarding urban housing, and urbanization in general, and the legal and bureaucratic obstacles they face in achieving them. Why should this disjunction persist five years after the post-apartheid government came to power? Does the answer lie simply in the shallowness of



local government reform resulting from the non-revolutionary transition in South Africa? Or does it lie in the contradictions of transformation in contemporary South Africa, where continuities with the past are reinforced by a global context that is unsympathetic to radical restructuring? If the latter is the case, what can be done to address the aspirations of people such as the residents of Monwabisi Park?

Settlement began in Monwabisi Park in the second half of 1996 (details of the process of settlement are examined below). By the end of April 1999, Monwabisi Park consisted of 2,189 shack dwellings, each with a number painted on its door by officials of the City of Tygerberg Local Municipal Authority (the municipality in whose area of jurisdiction Monwabisi Park is situated). 100 of these 2,189 dwellings were selected randomly (the residents of every twenty-second dwelling were interviewed). Inspection of the interview schedules after the survey revealed, however, that two were incomplete and could not be used for purposes of analysis. The final sample therefore comprised 98 dwellings, or 4.5% of the total number of dwellings in the settlement.

The survey was discussed extensively with the Monwabisi Park Residents Committee in mid-April 1999. The aim of the survey was to construct a profile of the residents and their circumstances to help the Committee in its negotiations with the City of Tygerberg regarding the settlement's future, and to provide the Committee's legal counsel with information to assist their future actions.

Monwabisi Park covers a large area. The settlement is strung out for over a kilometre to the south west of Mew Way, on the eastern fringe of Khayelitsha. Dwellings are clustered along the edge of Mew Way, to enable people to draw water and electricity from the site-and-service settlement of Harare, on the other side of the road. Over time, however, dwellings have spread 400 or so meters back from Mew Way, to the edge of the decline down to Baden Powell Drive on the False Bay coast. With plenty of land at their disposal, residents have spread their dwellings out in a deliberate attempt to avoid the danger of fire, and to leave space for yards, paths, and the provision of services.

## **Population and Prior Residence**

### **Population**

Monwabisi Park does not appear in the recent GIS-based 'shack count' in the CMA by Abbott and Douglas (1999). To judge from their figures, however, Monwabisi Park should rank as the eighth biggest shack-settlement in the city, in terms of the number of dwellings, and certainly as one of the

fastest growing in the period 1996- 1999. Yet the total population of Monwabisi Park is low, compared to other informal settlements. The survey found that the total population of the 98 surveyed dwellings was 331 in May 1999. Thus the projection for the total population of the 2,189 dwellings in the settlement at that date was only 7 356.

**Household Size**

Most surveys in informal settlements assume that the inhabitants of a single dwelling comprise a household. To ensure comparability, the same convention is adopted in respect of Monwabisi Park, although the usefulness of this convention is discussed further below.

Mean household size for the surveyed households was 3.38.

The range of household sizes in the sample is given in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Distribution of household sizes, Monwabisi Park**

| Household size | Number of households |
|----------------|----------------------|
| 1              | 12                   |
| 2              | 19                   |
| 3              | 26                   |
| 4              | 20                   |
| 5              | 9                    |
| 6              | 8                    |
| 7              | 3                    |
| 8              | 0                    |
| 9              | 1                    |
| Total          | 98                   |

The recent study by Cross and Bekker (1999) indicated that mean household size in informal settlements (both African and coloured) in the CMA (4.43) is smaller than mean household size in African (4.56) and coloured (5.08) townships. But mean household size in Monwabisi Park was smaller than in any of the informal African settlements they surveyed.

**Table 2: Mean household size in selected informal settlements in the CMA, 1999**

| Informal settlement | Mean household size |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Wallacedene         | 5.28                |
| Site B1             | 5.12                |
| Blockombos          | 4.93                |
| Site B2             | 3.95                |
| Browns Farm         | 3.87                |
| Imizamo Yethu       | 3.53                |
| Monwabisi Park      | 3.38                |

Source for comparative sites: C. Cross and S. Bekker, 1999. Sample size for each site in their survey was 40.

### Age of Population

One striking characteristic of the residents of Monwabisi Park is their youth. The mean age of the 98 household heads in the survey was 31 years. The age distribution of the whole population of the sample is given below in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Age distribution of sample population, Monwabisi Park**

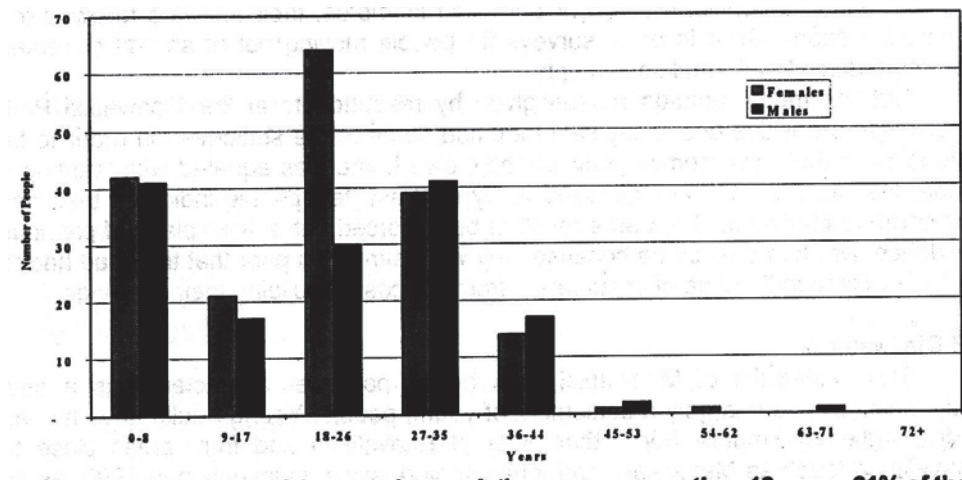


Figure 1 shows that 36% of the sample population was younger than 18 years, 61 % of the population was in the 1844 years interval, and only 3% was 45 years or older

### **Prior Residence**

96 of the 98 household heads in the survey gave the Eastern Cape as their place of birth. Most of these household heads were born in one or other of the former 'homeland' areas in this province (Transkei and Ciskei).

But, with two exceptions, they had not come directly from the Eastern Cape to Monwabisi Park. 11 % of them had arrived in the CMA more than a decade before settlement in Monwabisi Park commenced (1996), while 87% had arrived in the CMA in the period 1987-1996. For all household heads save three, therefore, Monwabisi Park was not the first place of residence in the CMA. Table 3 below indicates where heads of household had lived immediately prior to their move to Monwabisi Park.

**Table 3: Household heads' places of residence prior to Monwabisi Park**

| Place                                       | Household heads |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Harare                                      | 52              |
| Elsewhere in Khayelitsha                    | 36              |
| Elsewhere in Cape Town (incl. historically) | 7               |
| Eastern Cape                                | 2               |
| Gauteng                                     | 1               |
|                                             | 98              |

None of the household heads had lived independently before coming to Monwabisi Park. They had lived, with or without their current dependents, on sites that belonged to other people. 40 household heads had been living with close kin (parents, siblings), 28 had been living with more distant kin (uncles, aunts, cousins), and 30 had been living with unrelated people from whom they rented rooms or spaces to build backyard shacks.

### **Reasons for Coming to Monwabisi Park**

It is difficult to quantify the answers to the question of why people had come to Monwabisi Park, since many respondents gave more than one reason. In so far as they mentioned reasons such as overcrowding in their previous places of residence, and tensions and conflict with kin or unrelated landlords, their answers followed the standard reasons given in other surveys for people moving out of shared or rented accommodation to informal settlements.

But the most common reason given by respondents in the Monwabisi Park survey was a positive one. They said they had come to the settlement in order to be able to build their own homes. Having one's own home was

equated with 'starting a proper life', as one person expressed it. By contrast, few people indicated that they had come to Monwabisi Park as a result of being forced out of their place of previous residence. Nor had they come because they were simply so poor that they had had to look for a place to live free of costs (apart from the cost of building their dwellings).

## **Discussion**

The settlement of Monwabisi Park has a particular character. It is a new settlement, and very largely a settlement of young people. Young adults have moved to the settlement mainly from other parts of Khayelitsha and from areas close to Khayelitsha (such as Macassar), and it has served, since its inception in 1996, as an area in which young people can set up independent homes.

Because of their youth, the adult population has relatively few children, and those they have are very young (concentrated in the 18-years age interval, rather than the 9-17 -years interval).

Many of the adult residents of Monwabisi Park are part of the large inflow of people from the Eastern Cape over the past decade. Some came to the CMA with their own parents; others came on their own, joining up with siblings or other kin who were already in the city; yet others came on their own and had to find lodgings in the city. The move to Monwabisi Park was part of the process of 'on-migration' within the city to which Cross and Bekker (1999) refer.

The small total size of the population and the small mean household size reflect the youth of the adult population in Monwabisi Park. One interesting feature of the population is the prominence of young adult women in the 18-26-years age interval, which will be examined further below.

Although informal settlements are commonly depicted as settlements to which the 'poorest of the poor' are drawn out of 'sheer desperation', it is necessary to emphasize that the reasons residents gave for settling in Monwabisi Park were by no means entirely negative. To judge from these reasons, Monwabisi Park serves as a settlement of 'aspiration' rather than one of 'desperation'. For many respondents, the move to the settlement was the start of an attempt to fashion a successful urban life, rather than a search for a refuge of last resort.

It is difficult to say whether or not the youthful character of Monwabisi Park is replicated in other informal settlements, since there is too little detailed information available about these cases. Mean household sizes given by Cross and Bekker suggest that the population of other informal settlements may be older (although age is clearly only one factor that influences household size).

There is, however, a logic to supposing that the youth of the residents of Monwabisi Park is linked to the fact that it is situated within Khayelitsha, and has served as an ‘overflow’ site for people in the township and its close environs. Informal settlements that are further from existing townships, or do not serve this ‘overflow’ function, may have a very different population profile, and residents may have different reasons for living in these areas.

## Material Well-Being

### Employment and Dependency Ratios

In the 98 households surveyed, there were 209 people in the economically active age interval (18-62 years). Of these 209 residents, the following were actively generating income in the ways indicated.

**Table 4: Number of people (18-62 years) in various forms of employment, Monwabisi Park**

| Form of employment     | Number of people | (%)  |
|------------------------|------------------|------|
| Formal wage employment | 64               | 30.6 |
| Casual wage employment | 10               | 4.8  |
| Self-employment        | 22               | 10.5 |
| Total employed         | 96               | 45.9 |

In principle the formal/casual wage employment distinction is clear. Employment was recorded as formal if respondents said it was regular, full-time and with a company or concern in the formal sector, and was recorded as casual if it lacked any of these characteristics. But in practice the distinction between the two forms of wage employment is bound to be fairly arbitrary. It should also be noted that activities recorded as self-employment varied considerably, from running a spaza shop open seven days a week to the occasional hawking of goods in Monwabisi Park or elsewhere.

96 of the 209 people in the 18-62-years age interval were in some kind of employment. Of the remaining 113 people in this interval, 82 said they were not looking for work at the time of the survey. Seven of these people received state grants for various disabilities; most of the rest were fully occupied with child rearing. The remaining 31 people were looking for work, and were therefore unemployed. The 31 unemployed residents comprise 14.8% of the total population in the 18-62-years age interval, and 24.4% of the total population of work seekers in this interval.

The number of people who received wages or the returns from self-employment, or grants was 103 or 49.3% of the total number of 209 people in the 18- 62-years age interval. A further eight people in the age interval 9-17-years were engaged in casual wage employment and self-employment. Thus, a total of 111 of the 331 people in the sample were in direct receipt of an income of some kind at the time of the survey. This indicates an overall dependency ratio for the sample of 1:1.98.

Bearing in mind that much casual and self-employment is under-employment, with low incomes, another way of expressing the dependency ratio is to compare those in formal wage employment and those in receipt of grants (those who have a reliable income) to the rest of the population. This gives an alternative dependency ratio of 1:3.66.

### **Income**

Collection of detailed income figures for households is time-consuming, and almost invariably gives rise to a spurious impression of accuracy. Given the time constraints on the survey in Monwabisi Park, it was necessary to adopt a far more impressionistic method of assessing income (it is an open question whether or not the results are a great deal less accurate than those achieved by conventional methods).

The impression gained from respondents was that a standard wage for formal wage employment fell within the range of R1 500 to R2 000 per month (occupations that were common included building workers, truck drivers, and shop, restaurant and factory workers). Casual workers (domestics, gardeners, and casual labourers) earned considerably less, often between R500 and R750 per month. Because of wide variation, the returns from self-employment are almost impossible to assess in aggregate, and it was decided to estimate them as being at the same levels as casual wage employment (which is probably a considerable underestimate in many instances).

The mean number of formal wage earners per household in the sample was 0.65, and the mean number of casual wage earners and persons in self-employment per household was 0.41. This implies that mean monthly income from these sources ranged from R1, 180 (lowest estimate) to R1,61 0 (highest estimate).

There were ten households in the sample (10.2%) that had no income from these sources at all at the time of survey. At the other extreme, the best-off household in the survey had two members in formal wage employment and another member who was self-employed, giving an estimated income from these sources of between R3, 500 and R4, 750 per month.



The rough estimate is that about 70% of households had a total monthly income below the R1, 500 limit, and would therefore qualify for the full subsidy under the National Housing Subsidy scheme. But it is unlikely that any attempt would ever be made to split the population into those households that did and did not qualify.

**Discussion**

The unemployment rate of just below 25% in Monwabisi Park in April/May 1999 is broadly consistent with the findings of other surveys. These surveys show that unemployment in informal settlements in the CMA is relatively low, certainly relative to the situation in the rural Eastern Cape from which most residents originated.

Cross and Bekker (1999) calculated unemployment for heads of households only, and found a 22% unemployment rate for household heads in all informal areas they surveyed in the CMA. Details of their findings are given in Table 5, along with the parallel findings from Monwabisi Park.

**Table 5: Employment status of household heads in a sample of informal settlements and in Monwabisi Park, 1999 (percentages)**

| Employment status           | Informal settlements | Monwabisi Park |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Student                     | -                    | 2              |
| Retired                     | 5                    | -              |
| Disabled                    | 1                    | 4              |
| Housewife                   | 8                    | 12             |
| Unemployed/Seeking work     | 22                   | 12             |
| Unemployed Not seeking work | -                    | -              |
| Working                     | 49                   | 55             |
| Self-employed               | 17                   | 14             |

Source: Cross and Bekker, 1999: Table 2.9

The comparison in Table 5 indicates that fewer heads of household were unemployed and seeking work in Monwabisi Park than in the other informal settlements surveyed by Cross and Bekker. It also shows that employment (working plus self-employment) was slightly higher in Monwabisi Park than in the other informal settlements. These differences are probably associated with the relative youth of the household heads in Monwabisi Park. Being young, the household heads are able and willing to do the kinds of physically demanding jobs that are available to people from informal settlements. The suggestion from other sources is that most adults in informal settlements grew up in the rural Eastern Cape and have lower school-leaving qualifications than township

residents, most of whom were educated in Cape Town. This limits their access to non-manual jobs. The Monwabisi Park survey did not collect information on levels of education, but this argument is likely to apply in the settlement.

On the other hand, it should be noted that Monwabisi Park household heads had spent several years in the CMA prior to moving to the settlement. Several respondents commented explicitly on the fact that they had good contacts, including knowledgeable kin, in the city's labour market, and had also had time to learn their own way round the market. Most of the household heads who were interviewed seemed reasonably confident of retaining the jobs they currently held or of finding new ones without too much difficulty.

Estimated levels of household income were relatively low, consistent with the kinds of employment that residents were able to find, but the youth of the population contributed to the fact that dependency ratios, however calculated, were also relatively low. Per capita incomes were therefore rather higher than the levels of wages and earnings, and of total household income, would otherwise suggest. In this respect, the findings concerning employment and income in the sample confirm the initial impression that the residents of Monwabisi Park should not be stereotyped as the 'poorest of the poor', living lives of extreme poverty and desperation in the cheapest possible environment. Moreover, the findings suggest that the ambition that many residents expressed of leading a successful urban existence by moving to Monwabisi Park is not wholly unrealistic.

## **Differentiation in Monwabisi Park**

### **Income Distribution and Gender**

Differences in levels of household income and in dependency ratios were not linked to differences in the periods of time that households had spent in Monwabisi Park. Longer residence in the settlement did not confer any advantage in the search for sources of income. This is to be expected, given that the most residents had lived in the CMA, and indeed in the close vicinity, for a number of years before coming to the settlement.

There was some positive linkage between household size and levels of income and dependency ratios in the sample. Some of the larger households had more members available to earn income in one or other way, thereby increasing total household income and lowering the ratio of dependents to income earners. This issue will be examined briefly in the next section below.

The most significant variable relating to differences in household income and dependency ratios, however, was the gender of the household head. As other surveys have shown, households headed by men were better off in terms

of all indices than those headed by women. This finding is summarized in Table 6 and Table 7. For the purpose of the comparison between male-headed and female-headed households, the 12 households that comprised a single individual living alone (7 men and 5 women) have been omitted.

**Table 6: Sources of income by gender of household head, Monwabisi Park**

|                                 | Male-headed | Female-headed |
|---------------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Number of households            | 59          | 27            |
| Formal wages                    | 47          | 12            |
| Casual wage/self-employment     | 26          | 11            |
| Pension/Grant                   | 2           | 4             |
| Total sources of income         | 75          | 27            |
| Sources of income per household | 1.27        | 1.00          |
| Formal wages per household      | 0.79        | 0.44          |

Note: This table excludes the 12 single-person households in the sample

**Table 7: Dependency ratios by gender of household head, Monwabisi Park**

|                              | Male-headed | Female-headed |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Number of households         | 59          | 27            |
| Number of residents          | 217         | 102           |
| Mean residents per household | 3.68        | 3.78          |
| Dependency ratio 1           | 1:1.89      | 1:2.78        |
| Dependency ratio 2           | 1:3.43      | 1:5.38        |

**Notes:**

This table excludes the 12 single-person households in the sample Dependency ratio 1 based on all sources of income

Dependency ratio 2 based on formal wage employment + grant/pension

Estimates of income earned in formal and casual wage employment and self-employment were not sufficiently detailed to permit a distinction between male and female earners. The difference between male and female-headed households has thus been illustrated by reference to the variables set out in Tables 6 and 7. Any discrepancy between male and female wages or earnings in the various categories is, of course, likely to disadvantage female-headed households further than shown above, given that the number of male wage earners in female-headed households was small.

Table 7 shows that the difference in mean household size between male and female-headed households was small. But the differences in the number of sources of income and formal wage employment per household (Table 6) resulted in Significant differences in dependency ratios in male and female-headed households, particularly when the dependency ratio based on the number of reliable sources of income only is considered.

## **Discussion**

Physical signs of the differences in levels of material well-being between male and female-headed households were readily apparent in the settlement. About one fifth of male-headed households had laid cement floors in their dwellings, which none of the female-headed households had been able to do. Some form of internal wall insulation was also more apparent, although not universal, in male-headed households, and they generally had better furniture and household appliances. Most of the households that could afford to rig informal connections to the electricity supply in next-door Harare were male-headed.

In so far as it was possible to draw a clear distinction between a voluntary and an involuntary move to Monwabisi Park, it seemed that all of the few cases of involuntary movement (resulting from eviction from the previous place of residence) involved female-headed households. In these instances it appeared that the women's kin had refused to support them and their children any longer, leaving them no choice but to find a place where they could live as cheaply as possible. But this had not been the case for all female-headed households. Monwabisi Park held the same attraction for single women, alone or in combination, and with or without children, as it did for their male counterparts. It also offered them the prospect of starting a 'proper life' in the city, removed from the day-to-day demands of the kin or friends with whom they had formerly lived. It seems that it was this prospect, rather than force of circumstance alone, that brought many young women to start households without men in Monwabisi Park. Although women's households were clearly poorer, on average, than those of their male counterparts, most of the women concerned said that they were still better off in the settlement than they had been before.

## **Management of Household Change**

### **Domestic Fluidity and Uncertainty**

One factor that could easily frustrate the attempt by young adults to start a successful urban life in Monwabisi Park is the arrival of additional people

seeking to join their households. Previous studies have established the fact that many poor households in the CMA are not stable in composition, because there is a significant flow of people into and out of these households. One consequence of this flow is to make domestic circumstances unpredictable and, thereby, to render long-term aspirations difficult to realize.

Variables that cause the composition of poor households in the CMA to be fluid include the instability of the wage labour market, and the fact that a large process of migration into the city is underway. The argument is that when household members lose jobs, or other sources of income, they may be forced to disperse some of their dependents to other households, characteristically those of their kin that have more material resources at that time. Moreover, people who want to leave the rural areas of the Eastern Cape may prevail on kin already in the city to offer them accommodation on a short or long-term basis. The resulting flow of people between households can, indeed, be seen as a cultural response to problems of poverty and urban migration, in so far as it involves a wide-spread emphasis on the importance of establishing and maintaining extended family ties. But, to the extent that this is so, this response has the effect of spreading risk, misfortune and inexperience in such a way as to hinder the efforts made by some people to plan their lives in the urban area. Young adults may have planned their move to Monwabisi Park as part of an attempt to streamline their responsibilities to a network of kin stretching from CMA to the Eastern Cape. But this attempt could be thwarted by a sense of continuing obligation to relatives in distress, or relatives wanting to make the same move to the urban area as they themselves had made some years previously.

The survey did not manage to gain information about people who might have left the sampled households subsequent to their establishment in Monwabisi Park. This is because it is both difficult and time-consuming to ask questions about people who were, but are no longer, members of a given household. But the survey did establish when each of the current members of the sampled households had arrived in the settlement.

The finding was that the arrival of current members had been staggered in the case of 33 of the 98 households in the survey (this calculation excluded the birth of children, subsequent to arrival). Given that the settlement has been in existence only since 1996 and that most households were established subsequent to this, the fact that as many as one-third of the households had already changed composition owing to the arrival of new members is an indication of significant domestic fluidity.

Yet it does not seem as if this domestic fluidity was randomly, and therefore unpredictably, distributed amongst the residents of Monwabisi Park.

Firstly, most of the new arrivals had come from the Eastern Cape, or from areas of the Western Cape outside the CMA, rather than from within the CMA itself. This indicates that households in the settlement were providing an urban foothold for rural kin more often than a refuge for urban kin who had fallen on hard times.

Secondly, there is a striking difference between the number of male-headed and female-headed households that had taken in additional members subsequent to the move to Monwabisi Park. As noted above, there were 66 households in the sample that were male-headed or consisted of a single man, and 32 households that were female-headed or consisted of a single woman. 13 of the 66 households, and 20 of the 32 households had taken in extra people.

Of the 13 male-headed households, two had consisted of a pair of co-resident brothers, one of whom had subsequently married. Another three had comprised a couple who had brought their children from the Eastern Cape to join them as soon as they had set up their own home. These children had been left in the care of grandparents while the parents established themselves in town. The remaining 8 cases had been nuclear family households that had taken in kin from the Eastern Cape. In all instances, the additional kin had been young adults (most of whom had found employment in the city, and contributed to the host household), kin of the husband (or male partner) rather than the wife (or female partner), and close kin such as the husband's younger brothers or sisters. Five of these households had taken in one person only, two had taken in two people, and one had taken in three. These were the households for which larger size was positively associated with an increase, rather than a decrease, in material well-being.

The contrast with the 20 female-headed households is instructive. In four cases, single mothers were joined by children from the Eastern Cape. In the other cases, women had been joined by their sisters or female cousins from the Eastern Cape, or by their mothers, sisters, cousins or female friends who had been living elsewhere in the CMA or the Western Cape. In many of these cases, the adult women who had joined the household had brought their own young children with them, swelling the number of dependents relative to the number of members receiving an income. Some of the female heads said they had invited kin or friends to live with them in order to share the domestic burden and to be a source of companionship. Others said, somewhat ruefully, that they had found it difficult to turn down a female relative's request to move in, even though it meant taking in up to five additional household members.

All households in Monwabisi Park are in some measure unstable. For instance, there were 34 nuclear family households in the sample, and in many of these cases the household head is likely to have younger siblings outside the CMA who want to come to the city in the near future. Since eight nuclear family households had already taken in such kin, the chances of more doing so would seem to be high. Yet it seems that there is a substantial pool of households in the settlement in which the process of taking in new members has been, and can be, closely managed. This pool includes the current nuclear family households and the male-headed households that have already been extended by the addition of the household head's close kin. Within this pool the process of managing household change is pursued by reference to both cultural norms and practices and self-interest. It is seen as normal and acceptable for men to accommodate to their own kin rather than those of their wives, and for men particularly, perhaps, young men - to be selective about which of their kin they will assist in this way.

The non-conjugal, female-headed households in Monwabisi Park, on the other hand, face a different set of moral expectations, forged from an amalgam of women's cultural role as mothers, nurturers and care-givers, and their historical experience of standing together in the absence of men. These expectations stress the virtue of not counting the cost of giving, and of defining self-interest in collective terms. Female household heads have less scope to limit the intake of new members, or to select them for the material contribution they may make to domestic well-being. Thus, one may suggest, it is in respect of their households in particular that domestic fluidity is unpredictable, and therefore difficult to manage.

## **Discussion**

The findings from the Monwabisi Park survey confirm the point that the households of the poor in the CMA and of recent migrants to the city, are not stable in composition. Household composition is fluid because there is a flow of people into and out of domestic groups. This is an insight for which social anthropologists can take much of the credit, and they are correct to argue that planners should be aware of this domestic fluidity.

But the evidence from Monwabisi Park also suggests that the social anthropologists may overstate their case regarding the issue of domestic fluidity. The anthropological argument often seems to suggest that changes in household composition are entirely unpredictable. In this argument, the fact that people are poor, and have kinship links with the Eastern Cape, means that they can never predict when their kin will arrive on their doorstep, seeking respite from economic or social misfortune or a foothold in the city. If this



were true, it would mean it would be virtually impossible for the people themselves, or professional planners, to plan anything. How could households plan their future, if the extent of their membership is open to short-term flux? And how could urban planners design homes for households that have no predictable pattern of growth and development?

The Monwabisi Park findings suggest, however, that the unpredictability of changing household composition can easily be overstated. They show, in the first place, that young adults can make an explicit effort to structure their households to fit what they perceive as the realities of successful urban adaptation. In many instances these young adults left kin in other areas of Khayelitsha to establish the kind of household for which current planning makes provision - a small household that is self-provisioning. In addition, the findings suggest that many households in the settlement are likely also to be fairly selective about the new members they allow to join their ranks. The approach that male household heads take to new members is of a piece with the motive behind their move to Monwabisi Park in the first place.

What is striking about Monwabisi Park is the manner in which the unpredictability of household composition is linked to the gender of the household heads. Although the settlement has attracted numbers of young adult women who head households that are independent of men, their households are vulnerable in at least two respects. On the one hand they have relatively few members in receipt of an income, and, on the other, they are more exposed to unpredictable changes in household composition. These two characteristics are, of course, related.

## **Political Organization in Monwabisi Park**

### **Committees and their Functions**

Many outsiders are of the opinion that settlements such as Monwabisi Park are poorly organized, and in need of considerable assistance to run their affairs and deal properly with external authorities. This perception is part of the larger view that sees informal settlements as the last refuge of those who are helpless in their poverty and inability to adapt to urban living.

Monwabisi Park is, in fact, well organized, and its political leaders have shown considerable acumen in sustaining the settlement, and maintaining the spirit of its residents, in the teeth of the City of Tygerberg's two-year quest to evict them. The form of political organization in Monwabisi Park follows a pattern that is standard in many informal settlements, particularly in the early years of their existence (Cole 1987). The settlement is divided into a number of 'streets', each having a committee comprising local residents who are

elected into office annually. Street committees report to an over-arching executive committee, the members of which are elected every second year. Because the executive committee is large, and it is difficult to call its members together at short notice, certain representative powers have been delegated to a smaller 'technical committee' drawn from executive committee members. The technical committee is mandated to negotiate with the Tygerberg City Council and its officials over the future of the settlement.

As in other informal settlements, the chief functions of the committees are to allocate sites to new residents, to check the credentials of prospective residents to ensure that they have no criminal record and no prior reputation as trouble makers, and to maintain law and order in the settlement. In Monwabisi Park the committees have drawn up a long list of rules and practices to which new residents are obliged to consent. Amongst other things, these rules give the committees authority to intervene in the private affairs of households under certain circumstances. The rules state, for instance, that while a dispute between a couple who are formally married is a matter for their families to resolve, the committees can step in if there is a dispute between partners who are not formally married. Certain infringements of the peace and good order of the settlement can be punished by the committees, by means of fines-in-restitution, physical beating, or expulsion from the community.

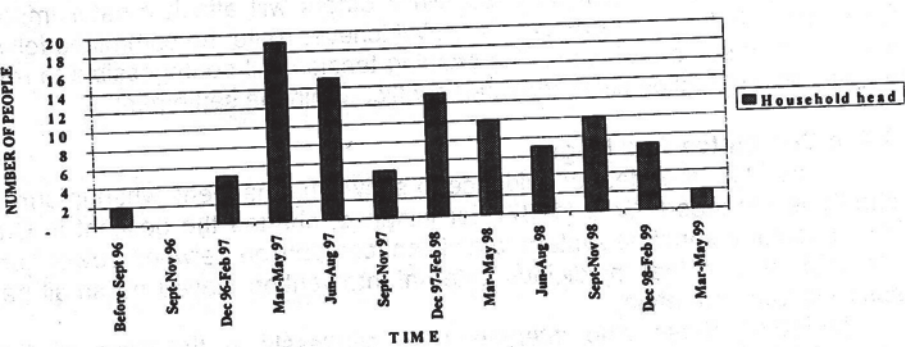
At present most residents in the settlement appear to hold the committees and their authority in high regard. The survey found evidence of a high degree of public involvement in the work of the committees, with most respondents claiming that they had attended at least one public meeting in the month prior to interview. Respondents were also able to identify the street committee member who lived closest to them, and to name the current chairperson of the executive committee. General identification with the aims and actions of the committees is undoubtedly facilitated by the fact that women are fairly well represented amongst their members, and the fact that the committees go out of their way to have important matters well aired at public meetings.

### **Arrivals and 'Voluntary Containment'**

Respondents indicated that the system of committees had emerged as soon as people began to move into Monwabisi Park. This raises the question of whether the committees, or certain prominent leaders on the committees, might have had a hand in orchestrating the invasion of the Monwabisi Park site. Officials of the City of Tygerberg municipality appeared to harbour suspicions along these lines soon after the Easter weekend of 1997, when a flood of new residents moved into the area.

But the survey found little evidence to underwrite this suspicion. It seems, indeed, that Tygerberg officials made a crucial mistake in believing that the rapid inflow of new arrivals over the Easter weekend marked the start of the land invasion. Figure 2 below shows when the 98 heads of households in the survey said they had arrived in the area.

**Figure 2: Arrival of household heads in Monwabisi Park**



The projection from the sample is that as many as 140 dwellings were constructed on the Monwabisi Park site before the Easter weekend (28-30 March). Respondents explained the rapid influx over Easter by claiming that this holiday period had given them a few days off work in which to construct dwellings and move their possessions. They argued that the invasion was incremental rather than orchestrated. Since many of them had been living in the adjacent settlement they had noticed that no steps had been taken against the people who had moved in during 1996 and the early months of 1997.

After Easter the influx of people continued at a rapid rate, as word of the new settlement spread throughout Khayelitsha, and beyond the township. One respondent, who had been living with her mother in Gugulethu, explained that she had overheard strangers talking about Monwabisi Park while sitting on a train. As Figure 2 shows the rate of influx declined markedly in September-November 1997, when the City of Tygerberg served eviction notices on the residents of the settlement, but returned to a high level after the executive committee engaged legal counsel to contest the validity of these notices. The rate of influx remained high for most of 1998, while pre-hearing wrangles between counsels for the respective parties continued. The matter never went to hearing because Tygerberg withdrew its application in the second half of 1998. But the rate of influx declined at the end of 1998 and the start of 1999, because the municipality began to tempt the executive committee with an offer of lifeline services, if the committee itself took on the task of preventing

further influx. This strategy of so-called 'voluntary containment' is the municipality's response to the failure of its attempt to evict the residents.

This strategy has quickly become a bone of contention amongst committee members. They complain that the scope of the strategy is anything but clear, given that the City of Tygerberg Anti-Squatting Unit saw fit to dismantle and destroy a number of unfinished extensions that residents were adding to existing dwellings in February 1999. Does this mean that the ban on new settlement includes a prohibition on existing residents taking in new household members? Some committee members are adamant that the executive committee does not have the authority to impose such a prohibition, or indeed any kind of blanket ban on new settlement in Monwabisi Park. The strategy of 'Voluntary containment' is an attempt to make the executive committee take responsibility for a problem the City of Tygerberg failed to solve for two years. But the committee relies on consensus for its effectiveness. This is evident in its painstaking attention to public participation, transparent procedures and democratic decision-making in the settlement (as well as in the inclusiveness that affords women strong representation in public matters). But the deal that Tygerberg is offering can never be the subject of consensus, since some residents will be willing to keep new people out in order to gain services, while others will attach greater importance to helping their kin from the Eastern Cape. Whichever route the committee follows, it will be damned by some residents. The ensuing tension will be impossible to resolve and may well lead to factionalism and open conflict within the settlement.

### **The Committee and Magic**

There is a great deal of evidence to show what happens when informal political authority is exceeded. Cole (1987), for instance, charted the descent in Crossroads from a popular committee system to a violent competition between power-hungry warlords, and insisted that injudicious external intervention played no small part in this disastrous transformation.

Moreover those who intervened so carelessly in the case of Crossroads unleashed forms of conflict of which they were scarcely aware, with consequences they preferred not to see. The same could well be true in Monwabisi Park. Popular support for the settlement's executive committee is underpinned not only by its careful pursuit of democratic principles but also by its capacity to exercise control in the realm of magic and mystical forces. In this regard it is significant that at least one prominent diviner is an important member of the executive. It is no accident that he has been a member since his arrival in the settlement, despite the fact that membership is subject to regular

election. His value to the committee lies in his ability to provide some safeguard to residents against the power of witches. The value of this capacity has been doubled by the fact that Tygerberg's refusal to accord the settlement any permanence means that individual residents have not been able to perform the rituals that are necessary to protect homes and households from this power. The committee has been able to offset this problem, at least to some extent, because it commands powerful magic that can be used for collective ends.

But magic is powerful precisely because it is ambiguous. A good diviner is more powerful than a witch is, and therefore potentially more dangerous. If a community splits into factions, the diviner may remain a diviner for one faction, but become a witch for another. Although the power of witches is an unexceptional phenomenon to the residents of Monwabisi Park, they have a deep fear of any situation in which this power is woven into internal political conflict.

## **The Present Situation in Monwabisi Park**

### **Background**

The City of Tygerberg Council has taken a hard line against land invasions since the start of the Monwabisi Park settlement. In March 1997, shortly before the large influx into the settlement, Council reiterated this position, adopting a resolution that stated that land invasion would be neither 'permitted' nor 'tolerated'. In line with this, Council ordered the issuing of eviction notices to residents of Monwabisi Park on 15 August 1997. These notices, which were delivered to many of the residents, ordered people in the area to remove their dwellings by 3 September, and gave notice that if they failed to do so, Council would apply for an order from the High Court in Cape Town to compel their eviction. Council appointed legal counsel to prepare its case, and retained this counsel for more than a year, at an estimated cost of hundreds of thousands of Rands to the tax-payer.

This costly hard line had little effect. In the second half of 1998, Council was forced to withdraw its intended court action, and the residents are still in Monwabisi Park (July 1999). Amongst the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the measures taken were bureaucratic tardiness and administrative error. The City of Tygerberg Council failed to take official notice of the Monwabisi Park settlement for the first six months of its existence. In legal affidavits drawn up for the intended court application, Council officials claimed that there had been no dwellings on the site until Easter 1997. This claim was part of their mistaken suggestion that the invasion had been organized to take advantage of

the fact that Anti-Squatting Squad members were on leave over the holiday weekend.

Moreover, when Council decided to move against the Monwabisi Park residents, its officials discovered that they did not actually have jurisdiction over the site. This was the result of a mistake that had been made in defining the boundaries of the municipality some time previously. Erf 18370 - the site of the settlement belonged to the Provincial Administration of the Western Cape, and had not been incorporated into Tygerberg's area of jurisdiction. A further four months of rapid influx into the settlement passed before this error was rectified by special notice. After the eviction notices were issued at the end of August 1997, legal counsel for the settlement's executive committee was able to identify several flaws in the process that had been adopted (including the fact that by no means everyone in Monwabisi Park had received a notice).

But the most important reason for the ultimate failure of Tygerberg Council's attempts to evict the Monwabisi Park residents was the passing of the Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act (Act 19 of 1998) by the South African Parliament in June 1998. Although the national government had repeatedly stated its opposition to land invasion (a position it continues to hold), the Act was intended to prevent the summary and high-handed eviction of illegal land occupiers that local authorities had undertaken routinely during the apartheid years. The Act required that in deciding if an application for an eviction order was just and equitable, a Court should give due consideration to several issues. These include the length of time that land had been occupied, the availability of alternative land and accommodation, and the special needs of children, disabled people, and female-headed households.

This requirement was designed expressly to address the problem of foot-dragging by local authorities, many of which were known to have adopted revised anti-squatting policies that preserved considerable continuity with those they had implemented prior to the adoption of the new South African constitution in 1996. Tygerberg was a case in point. It had appointed an Illegal Land Invasion Committee in March 1997, ostensibly to recommend a policy appropriate to the new dispensation regarding political and civil rights. The main recommendation of the committee was, however, that an arbitrary distinction should be drawn between people who had invaded land prior to the appointment of the committee and those who invaded it after this date. People in the first category were to be relocated to designate 'settlement areas', and could apply to put their names on a waiting list for 'housing opportunities'. People in the second category were simply to be evicted from



the land they had occupied, without any acknowledgement by Council of their rights to 'housing opportunities'. The significance of the distinction was open to question, since there was no indication at the time, or subsequently, that the Council had any 'settlement areas' or 'transit camps' available for those fortunate enough to have invaded land before March 1997. In any event the passing of Act 19 of 1998 rendered this dubious policy null and void, as Tygerberg Council acknowledged when it withdrew its proposed court action shortly thereafter.

The end result of the long saga is not simply that Council was obliged to withdraw the action to evict the Monwabisi Park residents. Without formally renouncing its hard line against land invasions, Council has subsequently also been obliged to give tacit recognition to the current residents of Monwabisi Park. This recognition is an inescapable implication of Council's efforts to enlist current residents to collaborate in the strategy of preventing any further growth of the settlement.

### **Stalemate in Monwabisi Park**

It is clear from the above that, despite all its efforts over the past three years, the Tygerberg Council has simply reached a dead end. It is, in fact, in a more difficult position than it was when the invasion of Monwabisi Park started. At that point, it would have been relatively easy to adopt an innovative solution to the question of land invasion. But such a step is now much more difficult. This is because after three years of ineffective action, anything Council does in relation to Monwabisi Park (including the ill-considered strategy of voluntary containment) will send out the message that while land invasion may be illegal, it is entirely possible to get away with it.

The problem was not in Council's attachment to the notion that land invasions are illegal. Central government insists on the same principle, and no one can seriously propose that the solution to the question of land invasions is simply to declare them all legal. Nor can one realistically distinguish between private land and public land, particularly if this is taken to mean that invasion is more tolerable in the case of public land than private land. In this regard, it would be more reasonable to argue that public land should be inviolable, since land owned by the state is a public good which should be used to benefit the public at large, rather than a self-selected section of it.

It is more plausible to argue that the cause of Council's difficulty lay in the link between its insistence on the illegality of land invasions and its failure to take proper account of the provisions of the new constitution. The Illegal Land Invasion Committee appointed by Council was given only a month in which to come up with a new policy, and there is little indication in the



minutes of its meetings that it gave any serious consideration to the constitution's implications. The haste in which the Committee was required to work certainly provided plenty of scope for a cosmetic reformulation that masked the persistence of a fundamentally unreconstructed approach, not only to land invasion but also to the broader issues of urbanization and housing.

Yet such an argument does not capture the ambiguities of the urbanization and housing policies pursued by the Tygerberg Council (and the CMC as a whole). It is appropriate to point to the continuities that existed before and after 1996 (and to suggest that these were not unrelated to the continuity of the governing party that applied in much of the CMA and in the province as a whole). But it is also necessary to acknowledge that not all aspects of the prevailing policies bear the continuing imprint of the previous political dispensation. In the course of the 1990s, for example, the policy on housing would appear to have shifted from the apartheid-era insistence on housing as few Africans as possible to a new notion that everyone in the CMA should have a fully serviced formal house. For the last few years, as Cross and Bekker (1999:4) note, the CMC local authorities (which include Tygerberg) have placed considerable emphasis on a policy of 'meeting in-migrants with comprehensive full-service housing in planned environments'. Cross and Bekker acknowledge that this policy is, in some respects, laudable, but argue that the large flow of people into the city is making the objective less and less attainable.

Like the CMC in general, Tygerberg seems reluctant to recognize this fact. Its continuing faith in the full service housing solution is evident in its steadfast commitment to the notion that people who want their own homes should simply put their names on the waiting list and wait patiently for the local authority to get round to building them a formal house. The local authorities no longer build houses themselves, of course, and one may be forgiven for the suspicion that at least part of the official commitment to planned housing estates may result from the support for this option from the private housing developers who tender for state contracts.

Whatever the motives behind it, however, the whole exercise has the effect of making a fetish of the housing lists. Local authorities hold up these housing lists as if they were crosses for warding off devils. The *Cape Times* stated as much in an editorial on the question of land invasion:

*There are 31,000 families on the city's waiting list, some for as long as 15 years, and many others who have not even bothered to register. Each month, about 100 families are added to the list, but at the same time only two to four units are allocated*

to *applicants by the City Council. No wonder, people ... lose patience. ('Back to the bulldozers', 30.4.1998)*

One may add that the waiting list of 31,000 applies to the City of Cape Town only. Abbott and Douglas (1999) calculated that there were a total of 72,000 shacks in free-standing informal settlements in the CMA as a whole (with 24,000 in Tygerberg alone).

The metaphor of exorcism is deliberately chosen. Underlying the official faith in waiting lists is a deep respect for state-sponsored order. The fundamental characteristic of lists is that they give an appearance of orderliness. This appearance is often only skin deep, but it provides a bureaucratic *raison d'être*, by making the bureaucrats active agents and the citizenry passive. Bureaucrats compile the lists; good citizens have their names put on the lists, and they wait in line. Lists help to banish the bureaucratic fear that citizens might act on their own behalf, and, in doing so, expose the disorder beneath the orderly appearance. The existence of this fear goes some way to explaining the apocalyptic language in which officials refer to land invasions. Describing the recent invasion of land at Tafelsig in the City of Cape Town, deputy director of housing Saleem Mowser expressed concern that 'all hell is breaking loose' (*Cape Times*, 29.4.98).

It is to counter the idea of lurking chaos that this account of Monwabisi Park has laid considerable emphasis on the popular, 'bottom-up' order in the settlement. The report has stressed that the residents are not a random collection of the urban poor who swarmed onto the site out of sheer desperation. Nor was the invasion of the site a sudden eruption of frustration and discontent, stirred to open defiance of the law by sinister forces. All the characteristics of the residents - their youth, their success in finding employment, their aspiration to 'start a proper life' in the city, their democratic internal organization - are at odds with the official depiction. The report also suggested that a good proportion of the households in Monwabisi Park appeared relatively adept at managing the inflow of indigent kin and immigrants from the Eastern Cape. This finding poses a question about the extent to which current anthropological insistence on the unpredictable domestic fluidity of the urban poor in Cape Town underwrites the common official perception of the chaos 'out there', and strengthens the bureaucratic resolve to impose order and stability by any means possible.

This report is not an attempt to rehash the sociological vision of the South American 'slums of hope'. The 'slums of hope' argument was designed with a particular goal in mind. This was to counteract the notion that the impoverished masses of the *(ave/as* and *barrios* were likely to be a source of

revolutionary opposition to right-wing South American governments of the 1960s and to the American interests that supported them (Lloyd 1979, Mangin 1970, Perlman 1976). Conducted amongst American sociologists, most writing from a safe distance, that debate soon took on absurd proportions, particularly in the extent to which both sides were prepared to generalize their findings across a vast continent. This report is not trying to generate a new myth that the informal settlements of the CMA are, uniformly, models of aspirant civic virtue. Monwabisi Park may well be a special case, and the characteristics of its residents are unlikely to be replicated across all the informal settlements in the city. Earlier in the report, we highlighted the differences in mean household size between different informal settlements, for instance, and it would be extremely useful if further detailed studies could be done to explore the social implications and consequences of these differences.

## **Conclusions**

On the basis of the findings and arguments presented in this report, we reach the following conclusions:

- The City of Tygerberg Council should call an immediate halt to the ill-advised and dangerous strategy of ‘voluntary containment’ in Monwabisi Park;
- The City of Tygerberg Council should provide services to the residents of Monwabisi Park unconditionally;
- The City of Tygerberg Council should take immediate steps to provide the residents of Monwabisi Park with security of tenure to residential even.

The first two conclusions flow directly from the arguments in the report above.

The third conclusion is potentially the most wide-ranging in that the intention is to suggest that security of tenure should be granted not only to Monwabisi Park residents but also to other homeless people in the municipality. A comprehensive strategy in this regard is the only way in which the City of Tygerberg, and indeed other municipalities, could conceivably regain more than the appearance of order associated with the waiting lists. This suggestion marks a fundamental shift from the current notion that security of tenure must be accompanied by the delivery of formal housing to an approach that would allow the achievement of security well before the provision of housing and services. Rapid land release is not a new idea. Tygerberg’s Illegal Land Invasion committee mooted the idea in its recommendations to the Council two years ago, and the scheme has been piloted in Gauteng (Engelbrecht, 1998f Engelbrecht notes that the Gauteng

experience of rapid land release programs has been largely positive, although there have been several negative aspects that require further attention.

One obvious criticism of the fact that Rapid Land Release programs give priority to secure ownership of urban residential sites ahead of providing services and housing is that this is not in line with people's expectations. Even site-and-service developments have evoked a negative reaction that calls for the state to 'Give us houses, not toilets!'. Yet the point about Rapid Land Release programs is not that they grant security of tenure instead of, or to the exclusion of, housing and services. The point is, on the contrary, that they grasp the pointlessness of a fifteen-year waiting list and recognize that the official injunction that good citizens should wait passively in a never-ending queue is actually a denial of their civic rights. People who are on a long waiting list for housing have been dealt with in a way that marginalizes them, and actually makes them non-citizens of the city, since they have no basis on which to press for recognition other than the notional list. In this respect, of course, lists perform the classic bureaucratic manoeuvre of aggregating people from above and, at the same time, individualizing them as far as any cooperative action to pursue collective interest is concerned. Once people have security of tenure to a residential site, however, they are citizens of the city who can join together to press their demands for the further development of the areas in which they own land.

A comprehensive Quick Land Release program would forestall land invasions, because it would mean that people such as the residents of Monwabisi Park could make their own start on 'a proper urban life'. This would allow Local Authorities and the state in general, to work in tandem with the youth and energy of Monwabisi Park residents, rather than to thwart these characteristics at every turn.

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## The Role of Local Communities in Sustainable Development: A Case Study of Forest Management in Rural SW Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Although genus Homo emerged about 2.5 million years ago, the transition of man from the participant to a large-scale manipulator of the environment began only about 10,000 years ago. This transition has, however, taken its toll on the ecological status of the rural environment. The consequences of the ecological disequilibrium brought about by human activities has been a major concern for various government and policy-makers. This is the basis of the global environment policy objective which seeks to ensure that the current generation meets its needs by harnessing the natural resources without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It was in furtherance of this global policy that principle 22 of Rio Declaration advocates the involvement of local communities in environmental management. This paper therefore examines the effectiveness of various attempts by the government, aimed at sustainable development using the forestry sub-sector in SW Nigeria as a case study. The data were collected from policy executors as well as farmers/hunters and other stake-holders in the rural environment in all the states in SW Nigeria. The analysis shows that sound policy statements were not complemented with adequate implementation, while policy awareness among the people was not followed by strict compliance. Political problems as a result of non-involvement of local communities were found to be some of the major obstacles to the attainment of policy objectives. Remedial measures were suggested in the paper.*

### Introduction

With the upsurge of interest in the theme of environment, the current global environmental objective is sustainable development. This concept as articulated in the Brundtland Report stated that if humans continue to produce or manufacture, exploit the natural resources and reproduce in numbers at the present rate, then, they will narrow sharply the chances of prosperity or even of safe and secure livelihoods for the next and subsequent generations (WCED, 1987). This basic assumption of sustainability implies that natural resources should be treated as production factors, which need to be used and



maintained just like any other man-made capital (Arntzen, 1997). Sustainability in this respect, according to Gilpin (1995) refers to the use of incremental increases without reducing the total physical stock of the environment. Hence, all development and exploration or exploitation activities must be carried out with the due concern for the environment.

While endorsing this concept in 1992, the Earth Summit recognized the fact that for the efforts geared towards sustainable development to be successful, the local communities that form the bulk of the population in the developing world must be involved. Specifically, principle 22 of the Rio Declaration states that: "Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices". Since then, many voices have been raised in support of due consideration of the local communities. For instance, Younis (1997) argued that rural communities have a history of taking action over issues of concern to them, while Francis and Henderson (1994) claimed that for an issue to mobilize the community into action, it must touch a local chord. If this is the case, the issue ceases to be ordinary statistics, mere research reports or policy document and becomes 'owned' by the people most affected by them.

Despite all these, there has been an increased concern that many of the government policies supposedly geared towards rational environmental management in Africa have alienated the people for which the policies are meant. In this regard, Egunjobi (1998) submitted that the failure of many policies in Africa could be traced to the fact that they were cantered more on the values and understanding of elite decision-makers without due consideration of the people at the grassroots. This paper therefore examines some conservation efforts geared toward sustainable development in Nigeria. The forestry sub-sector is used as the case study.

## **Forestry and Environment in Nigeria**

Forestry is an important source of re-investible capital which provides support for agriculture and habitat for wildlife. It also improves the environmental quality especially, through its role as natural sink for carbon dioxide and its influence in the regulation of precipitation pattern.

In Nigeria, forests have held an important place in the cultural and economic life of the country. The forestry and wildlife sub-sector performs some strategic functions which have been recognized to be very essential to the survival of the nation. These functions as contained in the Forestry Policy (1998), include:

- i) Supply of wood as an important raw material being used in the construction, furniture making and manufacturing industries, especially in the manufacture of paper products as well as transmission poles;
- ii) Supply of non-wood products such as gum Arabic, tanim, medicinal plants and other important products which are derived directly from forest;
- iii) Protection of Nigeria's land resources against desert encroachment and soil erosion; and
- iv) Provision of sanctuary for the nation's wildlife resources and the creation of recreational opportunities for the Nigerian populace.

However, the current demand for forest products and services in Nigeria is imposing a lot of stress on the forest estate. Nigeria of today is witnessing an increase in wood-based industries while at the same time experiencing a sharp decline in the availability of wood (Momoh, 1987). Consequently, there has been an increasing concern over the endangered state of the forest subsector. For example, section 3.4 of the National Policy on Environment (1989) stated that forestry is to be managed in a way "to secure development while at the same time sustaining the productivity of the natural vegetation, protecting wildlife, maintaining genetic diversity and avoiding forest soil destruction".

In the light of the foregoing discussion, it is important to assess the adequacy of the implementation of existing forest policies in south-western Nigeria and this is the thrust of this paper.

## **Existing Policies and Laws**

The existing laws/enactments relating to forestry in Nigeria include the following:

- i) The first forestry bill (1897) empowering government to acquire forest in the then southern protectorate of Nigeria.
- ii) Forestry Act (1901) to control falling timber.
- iii) Forestry Ordinance (1905) empowering the Governor to constitute lands as forest reserve.
- iv) Forestry Law (1916) which provided for the participation of Native Administration in forestry.
- v) Forestry Policy (1952, 1966, 1988).
- vi) Endangered Species Decree (1985).
- vii) Forestry Cap 40.
- viii) National Policy on the Environment (1989).

The existing International Conservation Treaties to which Nigeria is a signatory include:

- i) African Convention in the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (Algiers, 1968).
- ii) Convention on International Trade in endangered species of world fauna and flora (Washington, 1973).
- iii) Protection of the World Cultural and National Heritage (Paris, 1972).
- iv) Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn, 1979).

Despite its battery of laws and policies in existence, Madu (1990) opined that forestry management up till now, has been aggravating the depletion of forests through mistaken policies. Lowe (1984) also agreed that systematic arrangements of managing forest reserve have collapsed and that there are now no functioning management plans for high forest reserves. Madu (1990) further noted that through faulty forest concession agreement, state governments encourage forest losses, while with the transfer of ownership rights from the local communities to the central or state government, local communities are stripped of the incentive to take good care of the forest estate. In a study of Oluwa forest reserve in South-western Nigeria, Salami et al (1999) found that some parts of the reserve which are supposed to have been protected by law have been successfully reverted back to arable land by farmers, while the practice of shifting cultivation is already in progress within the forest reserve. It is therefore important to evaluate the effectiveness of national forestry policies in South-western Nigeria where the most productive high forests of the country are located.

## Study Area

The study was carried out in the South-western region of Nigeria, comprising Lagos, Ogun Oyo, Osun, Ondo (now consisting of Ondo and Ekiti States), Edo and Delta States (Fig. 1). The total land mass of the study is 116,106 km<sup>2</sup> (Le.11.64% of Nigeria's land mass) while the total forest reserve area in the region is 19,527.60 km<sup>2</sup>. The total forest reserve area accounts for 16.82% of the total land area in South-western Nigeria. There are two main types of forest in the area protected and unprotected forests. Protection is mainly through reservation. The whole area is located within the region known as Lowland Humid Tropical Rainforest as mapped by Keay (1949). Trees here are very dense, characteristically ever green and the forest is usually exploited for its timber. Some of the most important trees on this region include mahogany (*Khaya ivorensis*), "Iroko" (*Melicia excelsa*), "Obeche" (*Triplochiton*

*scroloxylom*), “Idigbo” (*Terminalia ivorensis*), “Danta” (*Nesogordonia papaverifera*) and “Afara” (*Terminalia superba*).

## Method of Study

The data for this study were derived from the review of existing laws/policies and through both structured and unstructured questionnaires administered to the respondents. Two types of questionnaires were used; the first was designed for the government officials involved in policy implementation, while the second was used for the people for whom the policy was meant. The Directors of Forestry in the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Forestry Officers and Forest Guards fall into the first category, while the saw millers, timber contractors, farmers and hunters fall into the second category. The Directors of Forestry in all the states in South-western Nigeria were included in the sample while the rest of the respondents were chosen based on stratified random sampling. A total of 297 respondents were sampled in the first category while a total of 315 respondents were sampled in the second category.

The questionnaires were designed to elicit information such as whether the original objectives of the policies are clearly defined and feasible, the appropriateness of the strategies for implementation, other difficulties encountered in the implementation of the policies, the awareness of the policies among farmers, hunters, saw millers and timber contractors, enforcement of the laws and policies and so on. The questionnaires were subjected to content validity test and pre-testing. The data were analysed by using simple descriptive and inferential statistics. For example, the student test was used to show whether significant differences existed between the responses of farmers/hunters and timber contractors/saw millers in the states under study with regards to awareness of forestry policies.

## Results

Based on the perception of policy executors, six major factors were found to be affecting the implementation of forestry policies. These are shown in Table 1. The table reveals that policy statements and strategies for implementation are appropriate. However, the results that local communities for whom the policies are meant were not carried along in the implementation. This probably accounts for the political opposition frequently encountered during implementation and this is bound to affect the overall policy performance. The institutional difficulties encountered during policy

implementation (see Table 1) were further analysed and the extent to which the forestry officials felt that each of them had hired the implementation was assessed (Table 2).

It is clear from table 2 that the implementation of forestry policies in Nigeria is faced with the tripodal problem of inadequate finance, lack of necessary incentives to effect the implementation and non-involvement of local communities in policy formulation. Table 3 summarizes the awareness of and compliance with forestry laws among farmers/hunters and timber contractors/saw millers. The table shows that with the exception of participation in tree-planting, there was no significant differences in the responses of farmers/hunters and timber contractors/saw millers. The table indicates that the level of participation in tree-planting is significantly higher among the local farmers than among the timber contractors. Generally, table 3 shows that while the level of awareness of forestry laws and regulations is high among the respondents, the level of compliance is low. For instance, the field study showed that farmers resort to forest-burning despite their awareness of the regulation against it because it was perceived to be a cheaper means of land preparation. Also most of the people interviewed in the local communities felt that forestry regulations were being unjustly imposed on them.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The transition of man from food to food producer has held far-reaching ecological consequences on the status of the forest community (Mine and Vandermeer, 1990). This study has shown that policy statements in the forestry policy sub-sector are adequately articulated while the stated strategies for implementation are appropriate in SW Nigeria. The analysis showed that policy planning and implementation were based purely on the perception of the elite decision makers without considering the local communities in which the forests are located. This non-involvement of the communities has resulted in low effectiveness of the policies. It therefore appears that forestry laws in the study region are nothing more than paper tigers. All these portray a bleak picture of the future of forestry sub-sector in Nigeria.

Although Osemeobo (1988) reported that the current forestry policy in Nigeria was introduced when the traditional farming system was depleting the forest produce base, Ryan (1992) argued that studies have shown that the world's healthy ecosystems are found predominantly in areas under local community control. It should be realised that in Africa, the majority of people are dependent on natural resources for their livelihood and sustenance (Sibanda, 1996). Therefore, any policy on management of these resources

which does not carry the peoples along is bound to fail. The policy-makers in Africa need to appreciate the fact that there should be a paradigm shift from the environmental protection concept to sustainable land use. Sustainable land use according to Young (1989) is that which achieves production combined with the conservation of the resources on which the production depends, thereby permitting the maintenance of productivity.

In recent years, many reports have documented a number of sustainable practices of the local communities. For instance, Gliessman (1990) noted that the diversification of agro ecosystems with the incorporation of trees is a practice among the rural people that has a lengthy history. Chambers (1983), also reported that the rural people's knowledge and especially indigenous knowledge system possesses many dimensions which include botany, zoology, ethnology, climate, ecology and agriculture among others and that rural people's knowledge of the observable environment is often very detailed. Tewari and Isemonger (1998) have reported a successful involvement of local people in forestry management termed "Joint Forestry Management" in India while Chamber (1983) has canvassed for joint use of "professional outsiders" and rural people's knowledge, skills and resources in forestry. Igboanugo (1997) also suggested a forest management scheme based on multidisciplinary integrated systems approach that puts the peasant land users in the mainstream of management and given adequate information to understand what they are doing and why they are doing them. There is therefore a need to adopt a hybrid forestry management system based on both scientific indicators and sociological premises.

Experience and several published works have shown that when local communities that dwell in and around forest locations are alienated from the management regime, such forest land falls into "open access" and consequently suffers the fate of the "tragedy of the commons" (Chambers, 1983). To avoid this, Isik et al(1997) suggested that local communities should be trained and given increased opportunities (under close supervision of responsible authorities) in the management, implementation, marketing and sustainable use of forest biological resources. Restoration of some degree of local control over resources, as it is being practiced in Nepal (Stewart, 1984), and in India (Tewari and Isemonger, 1998) is probably the only way that vast forest resources in the tropical Africa can be managed. In addition, there is a need for an intensive public enlightenment campaign to ensure that the major cause of ecological problems: man is sufficiently made aware of his responsibility to nature, his fellow human beings and the environment in which all of us reside.

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**Table 1: Nature of Policy Implemented as Perceived by Forestry Officials**

| S/N | Policy Components                                                                | Number of Respondents | Percentage of total |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1   | Original objectives of the policy clearly defined and feasible                   | 290                   | 97.60               |
| 2   | Strategies for implementation appropriate                                        | 292                   | 98.30               |
| 3   | Local communities adequately carried alone during implementation                 | 97                    | 32.70               |
| 4   | Political opposition during implementation adversely affects the implementation. | 289                   | 97.30               |
| 5   | Frequent changes in government adversely affect the implementation               | 293                   | 98.70               |
| 6   | Particular difficulties in the implementation of the policy                      | 275                   | 92.60               |

**Table 2: Difficulties encountered during implementation of the policy**

| S/N | Difficulties                                               | Options<br>X=SA A D SD<br>4321<br><br>2 | f   | Efx  | X    | Decision       |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----|------|------|----------------|
| 1   | Lack of necessary equipment for effective performance      | 0 7 200 90                              | 297 | 511  | 1.72 | Disagree       |
| 2   | Lack of adequate manpower                                  | 0 20 198 79                             | 297 | 535  | 1.80 | Disagree       |
| 3   | Inadequate finance                                         | 90200 7 0 0                             | 297 | 974  | 3.30 | Agree          |
| 4   | Lack of incentives                                         | 10 19090 7                              | 297 | 797  | 2.70 | Agree          |
| 5   | Non-involvement of local communities in policy formulation | 200 90 7 0 0                            | 297 | 1084 | 3.60 | Strongly Agree |
| 6   | Poor monitoring process                                    | 0 90 200 7                              | 297 | 677  | 2.30 | Disagree       |

Notes: D = Disagreed (X: 2)SD= strongly disagreed (X: 1)

SA= Strongly Agree (X: 4)A = Agreed (X: 3)

X = Mean

| S/no | Awareness                                                                                 | Farmers/hunters   |           | Timber contractors/saw millers |            | value  |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|------------|--------|
|      |                                                                                           | No of respondents | %of total | No of respondents              | % of total |        |
| 1    | Awareness of forest policy                                                                | 210               | 100.00    | 90                             | 85.70      | 1.90*  |
| 2    | Awareness of tree planting program                                                        | 210               | 100.00    | 105                            | 100.00     | 2.03*  |
| 3    | Active participation in tree planting program and adequate compliance with forestry laws. | 90                | 42.90     | 30                             | 28.80      | 2.52** |
| 4    | Awareness that Nigeria is a wood deficit nation                                           | 180               | 85.70     | 90                             | 85.70      | 1.50*  |
| 5    | Aware that bush-burning affects plants and animals                                        | 210               | 100.00    | 105                            | 100.00     | 0.55*  |

NOTES: \* = not significant\*\* = significant at 5% level

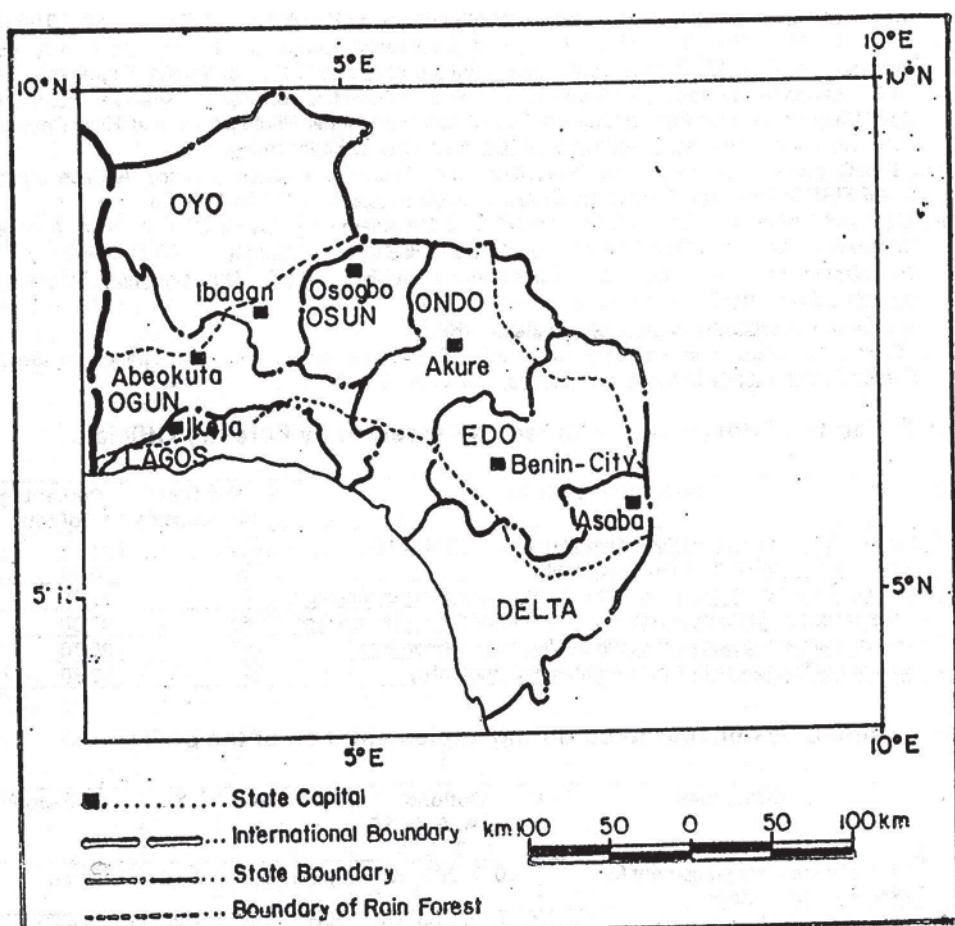


Fig. 1. The map of Southwestern Nigeria.



## Settlement evolution, cultural practices and the quality of rural development in SW Nigeria

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### Abstract

*Man's influence on natural ecosystems has gained currency in environmental research. However, most ameliorating efforts are rarely based on cultural parameters. This paper demonstrates the importance of some of these factors in shaping the rural environment. Two regions with different agro-cultural practices and history were selected for this study. Vegetation data were obtained from these areas. Questionnaires on settlement evolution, farming systems, nature and history of land use were also administered in the rural settlements in these regions. In each of the settlements covered, only farmers who have been farming in the areas for at least 30 years were interviewed. A total of 453 farmers from 38 rural settlements were eventually sampled. The results show that the history of colonization of each region affects the nature of environmental degradation observed. Specifically, the study shows how the evolution of rural settlements, crop dynamics and farming systems has affected the quality of environment. The findings underscore the need for the Environmental Protection Agencies in Nigeria to fashion out the appropriate environmental strategies that are best suited for different communities on the basis of prevailing agro-cultural practices. Such strategies must be successfully marketed to peasant farmers, since they take most of the decisions that eventually reshape the rural environment.*

### Introduction

One of the topical issues in environmental research is the extent of alteration of the pattern, form and structure of the natural plant cover in different parts of the world. Natural plant cover is essential to man as it serves as the lung of the atmosphere. Man is, however, under pressure which must be attenuated if he is to survive. How to cope with this dilemma is obviously, not only a problem but also a challenge which must be tackled with more seriousness than hitherto. For instance, Lovejoy quoted in Reiss et al, (1980)

has argued that “ ... the answers to many of the demands of our ever more hungry and growing population lie in the very ecosystems which these demands pressure us to destroy.

Research findings have shown that man and his activities have been the major factor in the alteration of the nature and structure of forest ecosystems (Philips, 1975; FAO, 1965; Adesina, 1991). Sauer's (1956) historical model of agricultural activity emphasized the role of man and described the modification of forest ecosystems as a process whereby natural plant cover is replaced by cultural ones. Aschmann (1966) have also argued that the development and spread of agriculture have generated remarkable changes in the structure and density of the world's plant cover. Rinker and Frost (1968) have contended that the activities of man are so numerous and extensive that some of the stresses he places on the environment are beyond the adjustable limits of nature. They categorized these activities into the forces of creation and destruction which are constantly working together in altering the environment and resulting in far-reaching and unforeseeable.

The introduction of cash crops such as cocoa into parts of South-western Nigeria has had a very adverse impact on the nature and structure of the original vegetal cover in the area (Berry, 1974). Thus, as a result of human interference, the natural form, structural characteristics, species composition, density and distribution pattern of the original vegetation have been remarkably altered. The aim of this paper is to examine how the tropical rainforest belt of South-western Nigeria has been degraded by the type of land use pattern predominant in the area and the concomitant environmental implications. The major aspects of land use related to vegetation dynamics in this study are the evolution of rural settlements, crop dynamics, farming systems and edaphic factors.

## **Study Area**

The study was carried out in a part of South-western Nigeria bounded by latitudes 7°05'N and 7°55'N and longitudes 4°15'E and 4°55'E. It is made up of five Local Government areas of Ife South, Ife Central, Ife East, Ife North and Ede local Government Areas. The study area which is drained by River Shaha and River Oshun and their tributaries lies entirely within the Lowland Tropical Rainforest Belt of Nigeria and tropical wet climatic zone characterized by annual rainfall and a mean monthly temperature of over 27°C. Rainfall is however, the climatic factor of greatest importance in the area and the wet season is characterized by two rainfall maxima. The mean annual rainfall ranges between 1,500mm and 2,050mm. The climate encourages forest

growth, while the soils are capable of supporting both annual and perennial crops.

## **Method of Study**

The base map was compiled from the topographical sheets of scale 1:50,000 covering the area. Two study sites were selected from the area. The first was chosen near the forest-savannah boundary. This is an area where both subsistence and commercial agricultural ventures are taking place with an emphasis on food cropping. This site is called Ede Region. The second site was chosen around Oluwa Forest Reserve in the Southern part of Nigeria's rainforest belt. This is an ecosystem that has not been greatly disturbed by agricultural activity (Salami, 1998).

Grids of 1 km<sup>2</sup> were imposed on the base map. These were serially numbered and 10 were selected from the study sites based on the table of random numbers. Each of the selected (1x1) km<sup>2</sup> grids was divided into quadrats of (100 x 100)km<sup>2</sup>. Five of these were selected using the table of random numbers. On each of the sampled quadrats, a small quadrat of 40m and 25m was demarcated around the geometric centre. This gives a total of 50 quadrats for each site. On each of the small quadrats, the following vegetation data were recorded: tree density, foliage cover, tree height, tree girth, basal area, volume of wood, over storey crown frequency percent, undergrowth crown frequency percent and number of species.

Questionnaires on the nature and history of land use in the area were also administered in all the rural settlements falling within each of the selected grids of (1x1)km<sup>2</sup>. In each of the settlements covered, some of the farmers who have been farming in the area for at least thirty years were interviewed in the analysis. The number of farmers interviewed in each settlement was determined by the size of the settlement which to a great extent, determines the size of the farming population. Depending on the size of settlement and willingness of respondents, the size of sample ranged from 10%-100% of the households found in each settlement. The questionnaires were administered randomly based on the willingness of farmers to respond. .

Vegetation data collected from Ede region compared with that obtained from the Ife region since they are both located within the same climatic zone. The results of vegetation analysis were related to the findings on the nature and history of land use in the area. The latter is based on the analysis of questionnaires served and responded to by a total of 453 farmers from rural settlements, sampled in the area.



## Results and Observations

### *Vegetation Degradation*

The mean values of vegetation variables in the study area were computed as shown in table 1. The table shows that the vegetation in the Ede region is more degraded than in the Ife region. The higher values of the vegetation variables in Ife region is due to the fact that it is situated in a forest reserve environment. The structural analysis of the vegetal cover shows that the undergrowth crown frequency percent predominates in Ede region, implying that the area has almost the first and second structural layers (over storey and understorey) which usually characterize the *rainforest* belt of Nigeria.

### *Evolution of Rural Settlements and Vegetation Changes*

Evolution of rural settlements has been recognized as one of the important factors responsible for the colonization of the Rainforest belt of South-western Nigeria (Aloba, 1983). The field returns on rural settlement evolution in the study area are summarized in table 2. The table shows that human occupation of Ede region had begun before 1744 while that of Ife region began around 1844. By the time the first settlements emerged in Ife region (1844-1893), more than 84% of the settlements currently existing in Ede region had already been established.

The field survey also showed that all the settlements in Ife region are migrant settlements which came into existence long (at least a century) after the indigenous settlements had been established. This is reflected by the title of heads of these rural settlements. It is only the heads of indigenous settlements that have the first order title *Baale* (meaning the owner of the land). The migrant nature of the settlements in Ife region (table 3) is also corroborated by the analysis of acquisition of farmlands in the area. Table 4 shows that 73.7% of the farmers in Ede region inherited their farmlands, while only 10.7% of them obtained their farmlands on lease. On the other hand, 85.5% of the farmers in Ife region obtained their farmlands on lease, while 6.6% of them who claimed to have inherited the farmlands, obtained them from their parents who originally obtained the land on lease, purchase or gift (Osunade, 1981).

The foregoing discussions on the nature of evolution of rural settlements in the study area show that the influence of man and exploitation of rural resources started earlier in Ede than Ife region. It could therefore be hypothesized that the longer history of human occupation in Ede region might have been responsible to a larger extent, for the greater vegetational degradation found in the area compared with Ife region (See table 1).

### ***Changes in Crop Types and Vegetation Structure***

Historically, it has been argued that agriculture is the most important factor leading to the emergence of the earliest settlements (Henshall, 1967). The impacts of agricultural activities should therefore be examined along with settlement evolution for a better understanding of human colonization and vegetation changes. When mature forests are razed down for cultivation, the structure of the vegetation is definitely modified. However, the extent of modification will depend on the type of cultural substitution. The types of cultural replacement of the forest cover within the last 30 years were therefore examined. To do this, the types of crops planted on the largest farm by each farmer within the period were used. This is based on the assumption that the crops planted on the largest farm by each farmer are most likely to give a true picture of the predominant crop types in the area. The results of this analysis are shown in table 5.

Table 5 shows that tree cropland in Ede region has progressively been giving way to arable crops. In 1963, 97.3% of the farmlands were occupied with tree crops, while by 1993, tree crops were retained on only 4.0% of the farmlands. In contrast, the analysis of Ife region shows that tree cropland increased progressively between 1963 and 1993, while arable cropland declined. This sharp contrast supports the fact that 75.0% of the settlements in Ife region emerged during the period of rapid cocoa cultivation in Southern Nigeria. This also indicates that the migrant settlers actually occupied the area mainly for cocoa cultivation, hence, the predominance of the tree crops in the area.

This disparity in the nature of cultural substitution could partially explain the results on table 1 which reveal that the structural analysis of the vegetal cover shows that understorey crown frequency percent (made up of trees of 10-20m in height) account for 9.98% of vegetation in Ede area, while undergrowth crown frequency percent (made up of trees less than 10m in height) account for 89.78% of the vegetation; but in Ife region their proportions of the vegetal cover are 41.04% and 57.16%, respectively. It should be expected that an area covered by arable crops (like Ede region) will be dominated by the structural class called undergrowth.

### ***Farming Systems and Vegetation Dynamics***

The practice of shifting cultivation is predominant in South-western Nigeria among the peasant farmers. This practice means that the over-exploited plots will be left for either another “virgin” area or a maturing forest which again, will be opened up. This process has twin effects of either opening up the mature forest or preventing the fallow plots from completing the

successional stages into mature forest. It therefore follows that the extent of this practice in an area is an indication of the extent of the human interference with the forest cover.

This land use method was examined in the study and the result is shown in table 6. The table shows that 76.0% of the farmers in Ede area are involved in shifting cultivation while it is just 6.58% in Ife region. This result indicates the extent to which mature vegetation has been tampered with in Ede region and partly explains the disparity in vegetation variables between Ede and Ife regions as shown by table 1.

### ***Edaphic Factors in Vegetation Degradation***

From the edaphic point of view, it is easier in most cases, for the grass layer to emerge in an open area whose nutrients have almost been exhausted than under a forest cover with high fertility. It is against this background that the fertility of farmlands as rated by the farmers was examined. To do this, the farmers were asked to rank their largest farmlands on the basis of soil fertility. The result of this ranking by the farmers is shown in table 7. This shows that 61.3% of Ede region are not fertile. In contrast, only 14.8% of Ife region are not very fertile. This contrast might be related to the result on table 2, which shows that Ede region had been brought under human activities (especially agricultural activity) about 150 years before the colonization of Ife region.

Given the low level of soil fertility of Ede region (table 7) and since table 6 reveals that most (76.0%) of the farmers in Ede region depend on shifting cultivation, the length of fallow as well as the level of fertilizer application among the farmers in the area were analysed. The results of this analysis (tables 8 and 9) show that the length of fallow in most (66.67%) of the cases is less than 4 years (table 8) while only 46.7% of the farmers in the area, were using chemical fertilizer (table 9). From the field data, the average length of fallow in the area was calculated as 3.05 years. The low level of soil fertility in Ede area (table 7) has therefore been compounded by population pressure which has reduced the length of fallow. The combination of these with intensive human colonization which has spanned over 250 years might be responsible for occurrence of grassland in the area as reported by Salami (1999); even though grass is not a natural habitat of this environment.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

It has been argued that understanding human impacts on environment may only be achieved through long-term environmental histories, based on social and physical science research methods (Batherbury et al., 1997). This

study has shown that settlement evolution is a major factor determining the extent of vegetation degradation in the study area. It was found that the nature of cultural substitution of the forest belt in Nigeria has been significantly affecting the structural pattern of the vegetal cover. This has resulted in a situation whereby the original structural packing of the vegetation in the area has been greatly altered. This supports the report of World Bank (1991) which stated that most of the tropical forests cleared each year are due to agricultural practices and the conclusion of Bilisborrow (1994) that deforestation is largely due to intensification of agriculture involving clearing the land of trees and of plant crops.

Salami et al. (1999) argued that uncontrolled human activities may rob the entire South-western Nigeria of the species refuge and genetic bank required to maintain an acceptable level of elasticity, amplitude and floristic stability of the region. The magnitude of agricultural activities in the study area; compounded by poor land management methods has been found to create edaphic conditions favourable for the invasion of forest belt by savannah elements. This is an ecological situation that threatens the continuous existence of the tropical rainforest in its usual form and species composition.

The findings of this study underscore the need for Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) in South-western Nigeria to evolve and promote appropriate environmental strategies that could sustain the level of agricultural productivity in the forest belt and at the same time maintain a similitude of the forest environment. The African continent is part of the developing world in which abounds illiteracy, poverty, malnutrition as well as tremendous potential for population growth (Cox and Atkins, 1979). The survival of the majority of the people in the continent is therefore based on the ability to eke a living out of nature. Any strategy designed to improve the rural environmental quality in the study area must therefore not only be conservation-based but also people-centered.

The application of agro-forestry techniques might also be a viable option in this regard. However, for this to achieve the desired result, Salami (1998) opined that it is necessary for the peasant farmers (whose activities largely affect the rural environment) to be involved in the process, by selecting multiple species, on the basis of criteria most important to them. But such agroforestry projects must be preceded by soil restoration strategies in the areas with long history of human colonization and edaphic degradation coupled with non-application of fertilizer. In this regard relevant government agencies need to make available fertilizers at subsidized rates to the local farmers. Previous studies in the area have shown that local communities are usually enthusiastic about measures that are genuinely designed to improve the

rural environment quality. Ryan (1992) has also shown that the primary concern of rural communities is the improvement and maintenance of biotic environment on which their survival depends.

Above all, it is necessary to improve the ability of local people to act in an environmentally sound way, before the governments in the developing countries can successfully discourage the exploitation of natural resources in a way that maximizes short-term profit (Sachs, 1992). Ryan (1992) argued that the reasoning behind this is that poverty alleviation is the only feasible or ethically tenable means of protecting natural areas in the long run.

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**Table 1: The Mean Values of Vegetation Parameters in Ede and Ife Areas**

| S/N | Vegetation Variable              | Mean Value  |               | Difference<br>(III) |
|-----|----------------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------------|
|     |                                  | Ede Area(I) | Ife Area (II) |                     |
| 1.  | Foliage cover (%)                | 39.76%      | 78.02         | 38.38               |
| 2.  | Tree Density /Tree/Ha)           | 448.80      | 729.00        | 280.20              |
| 3.  | Height of Emergent laver         | 24.10       | 35.00         | 10.90               |
| 4.  | Tree Girth (rn)                  | 0.32        | 0.65          | 0.33                |
| 5.  | Basal Area (m2)                  | 9.02        | 22.00         | 12.08               |
| 6.  | Volume of wood 1m <sup>3</sup> ) | 98.68       | 285.20        | 96.52               |
| 7.  | Overstorey Crown<br>Frequency %  | 0.28        | 1.80          | 1.52                |
| 8.  | Understorey Crown<br>frequency % | 9.87        | 41.00         | 31.13               |
| 9.  | Undergrowth Crown<br>Frequency   | 89.78       | 57.20         | 32.58               |
| 10. | Number of Species                | 6.94        | 7.74          | 0.80                |

**Table 2: Evolution of Rural Settlements in the Study Area**

| Period      | Cum. % of settlements in Existence |          |
|-------------|------------------------------------|----------|
|             | EdeArea                            | Ife Area |
| Before 1744 | 21.0                               | 0.0 ..   |
| 17441793    | 53.0                               | 0.0      |
| 17941843    | 78.0                               | 0.0      |
| 18441893    | 84.7                               | 1.3      |
| 18941943    | 96.0                               | 25.0     |
| After 1943  | 100.00                             | 100.00   |



**Table 3: Status of Rural Settlement Heads**

| Rank of Status | EDEAREA   |            | IFE AREA  |            |
|----------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                | frequency | % of Total | Frequency | % of Total |
| 1.             | 93        | 41.33      | 0         | 0.0        |
| 2.             | 117       | 52.00      | 225       | 98.68      |
| 3.             | 15        | 6.67       | 3         | 1.32       |
| TOTAL          | 225       | 100.00     | 228       | 100.00     |

**RANKING**

1. Baale1<sup>st</sup> order status
2. Bale2<sup>nd</sup> order status
3. Mogaji3<sup>rd</sup> order status

**Table 4: Method of Land Acquisition by Farmers**

| Method of Acquisition | EDEAREA   |            | IFEAREA   |            |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                       | frequency | % of Total | Frequency | % of Total |
| Inherited             | 165       | 73.3       | 15        | 6.6        |
| Leased                | 24        | 10.7       | 195       | 85.5       |
| Purchased             | 12        | 5.3        | 9         | 4.0        |
| Borrowed              | 9         | 4.0        | 3         | 1.3        |
| Gift                  | 15        | 6.7        | 6         | 2.6        |
| TOTAL                 | 225       | 100.00     | 228       | 100.00     |

**Table 5: Changes in Crop Types Planted on the Largest Farm (1963-1993)**

| YEAR | EDEAREA    |              | IFEAREA    |        |
|------|------------|--------------|------------|--------|
|      | Tree Crops | Arable crops | Tree Crops | Arable |
| 1963 | 97.3       | 2.7          | 90.8       | 9.2    |
| 1973 | 82.7       | 17.3         | 94.7       | 5.2    |
| 1983 | 13.3       | 86.7         | 97.4       | 2.6    |
| 1993 | 4.0        | 96.0         | 97.4       | 2.6    |

**Table 6: Farming System in the Study Area**

| Farming System         | EDEAREA   |              | IFEAREA   |                    |
|------------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|--------------------|
|                        | Frequency | % of Farmers | Frequency | % of Total Farmers |
| Continuous Cultivation | 54        | 24.0         | 213       | 93.42              |
| Shifting               | 171       | 76.0         | 15        | 6.58               |
| TOTAL                  | 225       | 100.00       | 228       | 100.00             |

**Table 7: Soil Fertility Ranking of Farmers' Plots**

| Ranking            | EDEAREA   |            | IFEAREA   |            |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
|                    | Frequency | % of Total | frequency | % of Total |
| Marginally Fertile | 36        | 16.0       | 0         | 0.0        |
| Moderately Fertile | 102       | 45.3       | 36        | 15.8       |
| Very Fertile       | 87        | 38.7       | 192       | 84.2       |
| TOTAL              | 225       | 100.00     | 228       | 100.00     |

**Table 8: Length of Fallow in Ede Area**

| Length of Fallow | Frequency | % of Total | Cum. % |
|------------------|-----------|------------|--------|
| < 2 years        | 27        | 15.79      | 15.79  |
| 24 years         | 87        | 50.88      | 66.67  |
| 46 years         | 39        | 22.81      | 89.48  |
| 68 years         | 12        | 7.01       | 96.49  |
| > 8 years        | 6         | 3.51       | 100.00 |
| TOTAL            | 171       | 100.00     | 100.00 |

## The Quest for Social Considerations in the Certification of Forest Management in Cameroon: Case Study from the Southern Bakundu Forest Reserve Area

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### Abstract

*Very little of Cameroon's vast and diverse forest ecosystems of global significance is under any formal management status. Events such as increasing urban and rural poverty, SAP policies, timber exploitation, and deforestation continue to have negative implications for conservation and development. The government's hesitation to implement the 1994 forest law and the precipitous decline in the country's economic fortunes up until 1997 have led to a marked increase in unsustainable logging by an anxious industry that feels threatened by the proposed changes. Forest certification has to be seen within the wider context of the many strategies aimed at improving the awareness of the importance of conservation and sustainable forest management among different stakeholders. But it is unique in many ways. First, it uses the market as a tool to try to improve forest management. Second, it dwells on forest management in the forest rather than national institutions and frameworks. When the idea of certification was officially introduced in 1996, the government was reluctant to accept its principles. It is now opening up to greater cooperative and collaborative partnership with commercial logging businesses, NGOs and other interested parties in timber certification. The analysis in this paper focuses on the social issues of sustainability, particularly problems of tenure, natural resources use rights, customary laws, gender and generational divisions of local peoples who are the key players in resource management. It is true that local knowledge often encompasses a deep awareness of the causes or conditions associated with trends affecting sustain ability. But forest certification is not to be imposed by eternal force.*

### Introduction

The concept of forest certification is relatively new in Central and West African countries like those that still have enormous natural resources. Consequently, the relevant literature rarely exists and viewpoints on the issue are still incoherent. Another point is that certification is not a word that social scientists are likely to be familiar with. So, I deem it necessary to make a

clarification of what it means at the outset. One of the most explicit definitions I have discovered in the literature argues that “Forest certification can be defined as the process that results in a written certificate being produced by an independent third party attesting to the location and management status of the forest in which the timber originated” (Elliott 1990: 11). Certification should not be confused or equated with the idea of ‘green labelling’ or ‘eco-labelling’ (Green and Brown 1994: 12).

One area of Cameroon’s national economy that is bringing hope for greater domestic and export trade is commercial logging, fuel wood and building needs. Moreover, the hesitation by government to implement the 1994 forest law and policy<sup>4</sup> has led to a marked increase in unsustainable logging by an anxious and ever-growing industry that feels threatened by the proposed changes. Much of commercial logging is still wasteful, being highly selective and characterized by the abusive use of the renewable natural resources. Sustainable management systems have been lacking and/or regulations are implemented with inconsistency. What this implies is that timber products coming from forests that meet sustainable forest management standards are rare.

Contrary to early opposition from the government of Cameroon to forest certification, the debate has moved on. This is because there is recognition that it can improve forest management, ensure access to markets and facilitate commercial and trade relations. All these negotiations should be premised on genuine concern for the perpetual existence of our forest and the livelihood needs of local communities like those in the Southern Bakundu Forest Reserve Area (SBFRA).

The earlier reluctance to accept certification was partly because little or none of the country’s forest ecosystem could be viewed as sustainably managed to be registered under the international standards requested; for instance, by selecting useful elements from the Forest Stewardship Council’s (FSC) 10 Principles and Criteria and the International Tropical Timber Organization’s (ITTO) Criteria and Indicators to implement a credible timber certification scheme for international negotiation. It was also partly because the protracted economic crisis had made timber production one of the main activities for quick money or short-term financial gain with little investment.

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<sup>4</sup>The current and progressive forest code promulgated into law in August 1995 makes provision for long term concessions and their harvesting according to management plans approved by the forest administration and for their treatment with improved silvicultural techniques. This policy also makes allowance for greater local wood processing before exportation and especially a more systematic involvement of local communities in the management of their resources.

Local peoples who are the key players in resource management have knowledge systems and social control mechanisms related to good stewardship and appropriate sanctions against misusers. The acquisition of knowledge for containing deforestation, maintaining biodiversity, reversing forest deterioration and improving the quality of forest management will benefit different stakeholders. This is notably the case of rural communities, which are directly dependent on the goods, and services of the forest for steadily improving sustainable livelihoods. Forest certification can create important opportunities for different stakeholders in each locality to better understand their different and sometimes contradictory perceptions of the changing social, economic, technical and ecological realities and priorities and how their respective ideas and interests interrelate.

Certification policies can be effective when local people are more likely to better husband the natural resources base because they are confident that the fruits of their labour will return to them or their heirs rather than to others. In other words, the degree of implementation in a region largely depends on a high level of understanding of such instruments of control. This is by stakeholders particularly the local people who are often powerless.

The object of this essay is to outline and illustrate concepts for the analysis of social issues in the certification of forest management. These are social factors which theorists concerned with economic development or the interaction between local people and environment tend to overlook. The main argument is that the involvement of rural men and women as individual actors with divergent interests in sustainable forest management and certification processes are not only essential for their 'empowerment', but can be a guarantee of lasting livelihood security. It can also lead to the creation of alternative economic activities outside forestry and the alleviation of pressures by maximizing efficiency in resource utilization.

This paper calls for a holistic approach in examining and addressing the problems of forest certification. Real progress in promoting sustainable development will depend on advancing a more complete understanding of the range of factors, which determine the opportunities, incentives and constraints affecting the local people who must bear primary responsibility for implementing sustainable development.

## **Browsing through Certification**

Certification is a very complex and sensitive issue about good management of forest resources, particularly timber, which touches on the sovereignty of a state. It should not be a punitive sanction but an encouragement for countries

so that they can become committed to better management of their forests (Mope Simo and Nganje 1996: 3). The appropriate structures must be created to make certification work (Plouvier 1996).

Forest certification is being seen by governments, forest managers, the timber trade, collaborating conservation NGOs, clients or 'green consumers' etc., as the key to controlling natural resource degradation and the wanton trends of deforestation (Upton and Bass 1995).

The need for increased efforts in tropical forest management was recognized in the mid-1980s. Since then there has been a growing tendency towards improving opportunities and building support for good forest management. Forest certification (i.e. forest auditing and forest products certification) is the response to a perceived need for consumers to attest to the location and management status of particular forests and the associated forest products. Thus, the rationale for forest certification is that "the consumers in developed countries wish to assure themselves that purchased wood and wood products come from well-managed or sustainable sources" (Groves and Lambert 1995: 18).

An objective of any certification scheme depends on who you are (forest manager, environmentalist, communications specialist, forest products marketing officer, etc.). Certification process seeks to promote development geared at improving forest management practices and their genetic resources and above all, the quality of wood products by maintaining the ecological balance in a given region. Certification is essential to acceptable stewardship because it assures green consumers "that their purchase of forest products do not contribute to the destruction and degradation of the world's forests" (Ervin 1995: 6). On the other hand, it is a means through which producers of wood and wood products can "achieve public credibility and recognition regarding their forest management practices" (Ibid.). In other words, to demonstrate that the products come from well-managed forests or sustainable sources.

From a technical standpoint two important questions should be asked here. What is forest certification all about? I borrow rather liberally from Nussbaum who remarks that "Certification is about checking whether or not a forest meets a defined standard of good practice. If there is poor management, improvements are required to meet the standard but an extremely important function of certification is to recognize forests which are already well managed" (Nussbaum 1998: 10). What this implies is that a forest cannot be certified when it does not represent a standard, which constitutes good forest management. The whole point of having certification for anything at all is to differentiate those that meet a standard from those that do not.

The other question can be stated as follows: What are the factors that are behind the movement? It can be said that there is a mix of social, market and government influences. Public opinion is perhaps the main reason for government action on forestry issues. Some of the most important aspects of public opinion and interest are:

- Disappearance of nature;
- Influence and depth of environmental concerns and the environmental movement;
- Biodiversity, old growth, climate change, greenhouse gases, holes in the ozone layer, etc.;
- Power of modern technology and machines;
- Speed of change and development;
- Rising human populations; and the massive human demand for raw materials and other benefits and services from the forest.

These factors push producers, customers and consumer marketplace to assure the public that forest products are grown, harvested and processed in ways which do not damage the forest and processed in ways which do not destroy and degrade the forest and the environment in general. On the basis of experience, it can be said that before the environment in Cameroon changed over the past two to three years, the government and the timber industry (both foreign and domestic) put little emphasis on sustainable logging practices (Green and Brown 1994).

Certification is not to be imposed by external force. The degree of implementation in a society depends on a high level of understanding of this instrument of control or monitoring and evaluation of good management practices by different stakeholders. Foresters, certifiers and consumers advocate that producers adopt certification. The interest of local people in this process stems from the fact that their life and cultures exist in symbiosis with nature and their survival is directly at stake due to the interventions of man.

The economic and social realities and human impact on the natural resources in the SBFRA will be outlined in some detail, for which relatively detailed oral and written information is available (see Mope Simo 1995). In the other sections of the article the social issues of sustainability will be set against the background of the certification of forest management.



## **Socio-historical Systems and Changes in Natural Resources Use and Management**

### **History and Social Realities**

In this section, I will attempt an illustration of the point that the Southern Bakundu dense forest zone which is a forest ecosystem with defined delimitations is also both a vital space and an historical and anthropological reference with great Significance to the local communities. The vegetative formations constitute a natural environment or 'a natural dwelling' rich in various woody and non-woody resources, where the appropriation and organization processes of the milieu are quite specific. The relationship between the local people and their forest, references to the ancestors who are resting there and attachment to certain trees are factors that make the area a 'cultural dwelling'. This cultural potential is collectively exploited by social agents according to their past, present and future needs. Even when it is not being materially exploited, it is a model of the social and symbolic relationship existing between man and nature.

The research site, which includes a protected area bearing the same name, falls within the Guinea-Congolian bio-geographical region. The area proper has an area of 18,000 hectares. But the unfirm ground round the reserve is 90kms. The protected area was established there in 1940 with the consent of the indigenous Bakundu and Balundu peoples. There are 22 villages in the study area with a population of over 50,000 inhabitants. In 1994, it was estimated that over 73% of them were non-natives. The indigenous people have become a bare majority today.

The choice is partly because even though a forest reserve was created there in the 1940s, encroachment for smallholder agriculture and illegal commercial logging has continued. It is also partly because the forces for change have made it highly stratified and the ethnic and cultural heterogeneity of the inhabitants who convert the natural resources to farm lands, export cash crop plantations, and logged forests. Basically, the majority of peoples (natives and strangers or migrants) are small-scale farmers. They cultivate a variety of food crops (maize, plantains, cassava, cocoyam, vegetables, and fruits), then cocoa and coffee as export commodities. The former products are not only for subsistence but increasingly meant for the local and even distant markets.

In the traditional social systems of the native Bakundu and Balundu peoples, there existed an extensive land tenure system whereby used rights and control over natural resources was based on sex, age and status. This tenure system still facilitates extensive land use patterns such as logging, collection of fuel wood or other forest products, hunting, shifting cultivation and slash-and-

burn agriculture. In the philosophy of the natives, primogeniture or preferential right of inheritance by the oldest son remains the rule.

In rare circumstances such as the absence of men, women can inherit landed property. The social expectation is that women are prepared for marriage and, therefore, forming part of her spouse's family line. Nowadays, the number of female headed households is increasing and like in the past the vast majority of women depend on agriculture for survival. As in the case of the migrant women, those of them who do not have access to land either use it on lease or some form of Share-cropping arrangement. Private property rights over land through the market as stipulated in the modern land law is still unpopular in the SBFRA and, by extension, other rural areas in the country.

As we shall see in a moment, the foregoing analysis suggests that the traditional rights of the local people to land, trees; and other forest resources are being abused and threatened mainly by outside forces. This situation is a major threat to the sustainability and adaptability of local resources management systems, and acts as an obstacle to initiatives to protect and rehabilitate the environment such as the certification process.

### **Changes in the Patterns of Natural Resources Use and Management**

Population pressure notably near the coastal parts of the research area and even inland is relatively high and increasing. There is rapid urbanization plus an increasing need for fresh agricultural land to satisfy new demands especially by migrants. For example, rapid rates of population growth in Kumba Central Sub-division which includes the study site changed from 138,204 in 1976 to 202,518 inhabitants (that is 70,112 urban and 132,406 rural) according to the results of the 1987 general population census in Cameroon (MINPAT 1993). The necessity to improve the agricultural production has made it difficult for the forestlands to be sustainably used and managed.

As it has been indicated above, the migrants who hail from various ethnic groups in Cameroon and Nigeria have settled in the forest reserve area during the course of the past half-century or more. Today, these strangers play a dominant role in the rural economies, principally as peasant farmers. Some of these 'strangers' as they are popularly called, who are long settled, control more land than even certain native households and families. Such persons often offer part of their uncultivated land to needy migrants who are mainly from their ethnic groups on either lease or sharecropping procedures. Evidently, human and agricultural encroachment and illegal timber exploitation inside the protected area result from several causes, particularly migrations into the region as a good market for unskilled labour. The problems of acquiring access to land are also caused by scarcity and

deterioration of natural resources and by power struggles at the local and household levels.

The local communities are conscious of the importance of the forests for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing. But the context of poverty in which they live is forcing them to destroy much of the forest in order to survive or make ends meet.

The agro-industrial companies operating in the area have employed some of the inhabitants but mostly the non-natives. These are: 1) the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) which is clearly visible in the Malende area with vast plantations of rubber; 2) The Mukete Plantations with oil palms found in villages such as Banga Bakundu and Bai Manya; and 3) UNALOR, a modern plantation specialized in the growing of trees for the match industry. .

The establishment of these plantations and the increasing population trends have two consequences on the rainforest reserve. They have created an important pool of non-natives either working in the estates themselves or providing ancillary services to them. Natives consider migrants as the main persons who are encroaching on the reserve and surrounding lands to which they do not have rights. My native informants often argued that this situation results from the non-enforcement of a strict legislation by the forestry administration.

It seems possible that especially peasant farmers are still clearing many hundreds and even thousands of hectares of forestland and other valuable trees are selectively removed as timber by entrepreneurs. During the fieldwork in Malende village, informants pointed out that one can hear chain saws operating in the degraded secondary forests every day, even on Sundays, which is the usual rest day for most of the inhabitants. One of my key informants noted that "If we were to trek a little distance from here, you will see for yourself how people are very active in the business. But as soon as they hear the sound of any arriving vehicle or human movement they quickly disappear into the jungle, sometimes even abandoning their equipment"(Djunkeng pers. comm.). Although himself a stranger (migrant farmer), this man expressed doubts that at the rate that the clearance and degradation of the forest was taking place, even inside the protected area, whether there will be any forest left for future generations.

Usually, it is not the non-native/migrant populations who do not have usufruct rights sanctioned by a descent group that experience the most negative effects of the pressures on the forest resources. The hardest effects are on the forest reserve in local communities with greater concentration of non-natives. These villages include Bai Kom, Bai Penya, Kotto New Town, CDC camps, Malende and Muyenge. There are two major characteristics of

the migrant farmer households. First, the fact that it requires less investment for the conversion of more forests into farmland than it does to maintain or increase the soil fertility. Second, the absence of any guarantees of (intergenerational) land tenure security makes it less likely for them to pay attention to the management of the natural resources. In this circumstance they are obliged to leave the land which does not belong to them through outright title or long term leases, to search for more fertile lands. An analysis of the available data permits me to argue that such persons contribute to the unsustainable use and little management of the permanent and non-permanent forest estates they can find around them lack of property rights contributes to the problem, too.

Such practices have become acute over the years and were worsened by numerous events in the 1980s and early 1990s. First, the decline in the world markets for the prices of primary commodities like cocoa and Robusta coffee. This led to the direct substitution of the export crop plantations by more lucrative food crops cultivation. Secondly, the massive reductions in the salaries of CDC workers and of course, similar cuts in those of civil servants in January and November 1993 motivated many people to return to their native homelands to take up agriculture. This is because farming is commonly viewed as a sector which requires little capital investment. Last but not least, the devaluation of the F.CFA in 1994 resulted in economic and social hardships for the majority of (materially) poor households in the urban and rural areas. Typically, there appears to have been an asymmetrical response to decreases and increases in the local prices for agricultural products (see Tchoungui et al.1995).

In the forest sector, logging for local and export purposes is as intensive here as in other rainforest regions of the country. The availability of opportunities to work in the formal sector and access to good infrastructures has opened more forestlands to migrant farmer households. So, virtually all the CDC workers (that is men and women) that I interviewed in Malende Camp often complained about the meagre salaries paid to them. They are obliged to use such supplementary incomes mainly for school fees and other social activities.

This may be because tree plantations are initially left intact following price falls for export commodities. Moreover, as mentioned above, the increasing involvement of both men and women in the production of food crops as a direct consequence of the destruction of more arable forestlands. Nowadays, such situations are among the root causes of biodiversity loss and numerous conflicts between the state/conservation companies and the local communities. Most of the local farmers want to secure the only means of

production to which they have access, given that there is a rising trend of landless people there, too (Mope Simo 1995: 614). After the best commercial woods have been extracted such lands are also open to smallholders, most of who, like the logging companies, do not often bother about the protection of the environment. Both of these are social problems with institutional and political dimensions, which need to be addressed.

As a result of better roads and easy access to ports and domestic markets by those villages in the southern parts of the study area, agricultural expansion is commonplace. The volcanic nature of the soils also makes agricultural diversification lucrative for those men and women who have the capability to work. It could be gathered from conversations with the authorities of the forestry parastatal, ONADEF, working in the area that more logging concession licenses have been issued in recent years. This means that more species of wood and habitats of wildlife are being destroyed. On the other hand, the hunting of wild animals or bush meat for subsistence and commercial purposes has increased.

The modern land system refuses to recognize as 'owners' the members of such communities who were in peaceful occupation of their lands before it came into force in 1974. However, local people in the study area, like elsewhere in the country, still perceive the resources of the forests as belonging to them. Logging exploitation has been carried out several times, mainly for relatively few high value species. An inventory made during the mid-1980s showed that the forest still has a considerable volume of commercial timber, but mainly of secondary species (Gilmour 1992). As it will be pointed out below, the conservation of the highly diversified plant and animal species in the SBFRA has not always been effective. This is because of the rampant poaching and illegal occupation of much of the land by non-natives or strangers.

From the foregoing analysis, it can be said that the principal relations stimulating forest disappearance in the study site are occurring in forests which are not well managed. One of the obstacles to the long-term productive strategies and timber economy in the years ahead is that the co-existence of the modern land legislation and customary land tenure systems do not guarantee continued ownership and control over land. Thus, insecure tenure procedures negatively affect the ability and willingness of rural communities to maintain sustainable forests management (Mope Simo 1995: 10).

It is in the countryside that a substantial proportion of the natives and/or permanent settlers still live and work. It is important to give the heterogeneous local communities the right and opportunity to live according to their traditions and in doing so, to protect the forest from 'invaders'. This is a

sound policy option for long-term social justice and equitable development. For example, the benefits of community based natural resource management can spread through all levels of the community. At the same time, it can be of benefit to the least advantaged members of rural societies and/or lead to their integration into the mainstream of national economy.

Despite the forces of Change that are affecting their milieu, the sophistication with which the indigenous and settled populations have continued to exploit the resources in the SBFRA is equal only to the sophistication of the tropical forest. Like the Baka pygmies of Southeast Cameroon examined elsewhere (Mope Simo and Nkwi 1995), it can be said that the Bakundus and Balundus will not be themselves without the forest. In other words, "The forest ecology is the nerve centre and basis of their culture"(Mope Simo and Nkwi 1995: 198). The impact of the relationship between man and nature shows an interface between social life and the environment. Therefore, sustainable forest management cannot take place in the locality without the participation of the local populations.

The local communities are conscious of the importance of the forests for their social, economic, and cultural wellbeing. But the context of poverty in which they live today is forcing them to destroy much of the forest in order to survive or make ends meet. Successful management in part will depend on strengthening the capacity of local individuals, communities and institutions to implement conservation initiatives. Thus, research must be carried out to understand local structures and to consider local populations as full participants in all analyses and decisions effecting long-term, sustainable forest management.

### **Social Issues in Sustainability and the Implications for Forest Certification**

In the previous section, I examined some of the socio-economic factors affecting changes in the quality and extent of the degraded and remaining primary forests in the study area. Although considerable changes have taken place in the lives of the inhabitants over time, they appear constantly in tune with the complex and evolving nature-society and society-society realities of their existence in the forest. This is even as they continue to diversify productive activities in pursuit of their livelihood security.

A discourse on the social dimensions of sustainability in forest certification should begin with the integration of a human face in conservation and



development projects. The analysis of social, political and economic factors<sup>5</sup> is essential for an understanding of the dynamics of successful sustainable development. Environmental degradation resulting, for example, from deforestation is a social, as well as a physical process. The combined decisions and actions of a vast number of stakeholders (men, women, boys, girls, the business class, etc.) locally determine this.

Sustainable development programs cannot stop at the development of more efficient resource management techniques or the implementation of legislation. It must be based on an understanding of what makes people to adopt or resist such programs, what makes technologies/processes appropriate or inappropriate in particular contexts. On the other hand, it should also analyse the circumstances in which local people are themselves able to determine sustainable techniques of resource use. Forest certification as one of the strategies to attain sustainability should be more supportive of gender relations and particularly encourage greater participation of women who are usually subordinated by men, in the design and implementation of environmental protection and use of resources schemes.

The analysis of the information from the previous section also shows that apart from agricultural encroachment mainly by members of the migrant households, the forest business community like most businesses in the SBFRA seeks to maximize profits. The forest operations the SBFRA are symbolized by a type of logging whereby the rush is for raw materials to feed standing transformation units with little or no concern for the ecological and social implications particularly to people living in or adjacent to such forest areas. Perhaps one of the ways of bringing this unsustainable practice under control is by proposing new social forestry and agro-forestry packages “as an appropriate and sustainable production system which could enhance land productivity and absorb the growing labour force” (Nair 1990: x). Another solution to the current issue of unsustainable use and management of the forest resources is a participatory strategy with actors from outside. The aim will be to identify alternative income-generating activities for the rapidly increasing population.

The point must be made that the community institutions existing in the research site should gauge the extent to which the local people are already managing their forests, assess their capacity to provide for community representation in the wider structures; identify the mechanisms for the

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<sup>5</sup>Policy-makers, development planners and the scientific community are beginning to give serious attention to the important role played by social, cultural, economic and political factors in forest certification. To this effect the first ever international conference to address these Issues-to which I participated--took place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in May 1996.



resolution of conflicts within and between communities and the state and show that they are weak.

## **Conclusion**

Forest certification is a very new tool, and not only has very little attention been paid to the institutional frameworks within which such certification programs must operate, but many aspects related to social, economic and ecological impacts of the process are unknown. Only time, assessment and monitoring of the current experiences in Cameroon as a whole will provide real evidence. Certification schemes have a catalytic role to play in the promotion of sustainable forest management. But it has not been designed to address all the issues related to this phenomenon and forest quality loss. It is by complementing other tools, such as national laws, international treaties and cooperation and local sensitivity that forest certification schemes will have the best possible impacts.

By virtue of the fact that local people regard forests as imperative to their cultural continuity and economic survival, there is a need to transfer more responsibility, resources and power to them. Greater account should be taken of local knowledge systems, cultural perceptions, livelihoods and property rights. Forest certification will make its real contribution when the different stakeholders who have a number of common interests work together and collaborate with governments.

The lesson of this analysis is that forest certification strategies cannot be successfully designed in a social, economic and political vacuum. The eventual success of a certification program in Cameroon cannot be dissociated from the level of economic and political development, particularly the democratization process, decentralization and liberalization. This will have a positive impact on transparency and accountability at all levels of society, and hence upon the effectiveness of a national certification scheme. On the other hand, it can be said that no certification program can take off unless local populations are able to capture more of the benefits of forest conservation and development.

In terms of recommendation, I can say that an alternative to the on-going destructive man-forest interaction and especially the clearance of forests for agricultural development, fuel wood, and commercial logging would be to design and implement more comprehensive policies that emphasize social development and a more equitable distribution of a resource such as land, because it remains the basic means of production in most rural economies. Such policies should concentrate on good forestry practices and maintaining

sustainable forest estates, which are capable of generating livelihoods and profits for all the stakeholders, particularly local peoples.

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## Conservation, valorisation des ressources naturelles, gestion participative et développement en milieu forestier du Nord Congo Brazzaville

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### Résumé

*Depuis 1992, une expérience sur l'habituation de gorilles de plaine à la présence humaine se déroule dans le tore: de Lossi au Nord du Congo Brazzaville. Elle se réalise grâce à la collaboration de principaux acteurs suivants: le programme ECOFAC (Conservation et Utilisation Rationnelle des Ecosystèmes Forestiers en Afrique Centrale), le Ministère de l'Economie Forestière, les chercheurs (primatologues et anthropologues) et la population locale. Cette expérience pilote se caractérise par l'implication de la population locale qui a d'abord tiqué sa terre à la conservation (création du sanctuaire) et ensuite participé à la gestion (retombées tenancières liée sa l'écotourisme) de l'aire protégée ainsi créée en association avec les autres parties prenantes. C'est après 3 ans d'habituation des deux familles de gorilles de plaine (Gorilla gorilla gorilla), Apolo: 22 individus et Ares: 31 individus avec lesquelles un très bon niveau d'habituation a pu être atteint, que la population décide de mettre sa terre au service de la conservation afin d'en retirer les bénéfices substantielles générées par l'activité touristique qui y déroulera.*

*La démarche a commencé par: l'envoi d'une lettre de motivation pour le classement de cette zone forestière en sanctuaire au Ministre de l'Economie Forestière des Ressources Halieutiques et de la Pêche. Mais, comment concilier le système foncier (mode traditionnel de gestion des terres) très prononcé chez ces populations Mboko et la gestion du sanctuaire? Comment organiser cette population et la préparer aux enjeux de l'écotourisme (vision des gorilles)? C'est à ce stade que le programme ECOFAC, sollicite le concours d'un autre projet Européen dénommé APFT (Avenir des Peuples des Forêts Tropicales), pour une étude de faisabilité.*

*L'expertise réalisée par l'auteur de ce rapport est concluant. Mais à condition que la population soit encadrée. L'expertise a permis de dénombrer les ayant-droits, c'est-à-dire les chefs de lignages ou de familles qui ont des terres dans la zone du futur sanctuaire. Le travail d'encadrement de l'anthropologue a consisté au début à la structuration d'une association des ayant-droits de même que la finalisation de statuts et règlements intérieurs du sanctuaire et de l'association. L'encadrement continu, une association des ayant-droits a été mise en place. Un projet de protocole d'accord de gestion a été conclu avec toutes les parties prenantes au mois de*

*janvier 1999. Le processus de classement du sanctuaire est actuellement en cours. Les ayants-droits viennent d'ouvrir seize kilomètres de piste en forêt de façon bénévole pour raccourcir le trajet qui relie le village au sanctuaire (soit environ 28 km). Ainsi, le véhicule peut déposer les touristes et autres visiteurs de Lossi à moins de 12 km du site. Depuis le mois de mai et avec l'appui du programme ECOFAC notamment la composante Congo, les ayants-droits viennent de terminer la construction de deux cases pour les touristes, un restaurant et la case des chercheurs. L'étape suivante concerne la construction de la pharmacie villageoise et de l'école du village Lengui Lengui avec toujours l'appui du programme ECOFAC.*

## **Préambule**

Le développement des pays dits du tiers monde a fait depuis près de quarante ans d'indépendance des pays africains, l'objet des aides tant multilatérales que bilatérales. Mais très souvent, comme nous le constatons actuellement en Afrique centrale, l'aide n'arrive pas au niveau des vrais bénéficiaires. Tout simplement, elle ne contribue pas réellement au développement des zones rurales africaines, si ce n'est que des élites résidents dans les capitales où ils roulent dans les voitures de luxe.

Comment faire pour que l'aide arrive aux bénéficiaires? Est-ce en faisant des dons sans encadrement et suivi? N'est-il pas important, après près de quarante ans d'échec des politiques de développement élaborés par les pays africains eux-mêmes ou imposées de l'extérieur, de penser à une autre démarche?

Faut-il apprendre à un enfant à pêcher ou plutôt lui donner du poisson chaque fois qu'il en a besoin? (déformation de l'adage chinois)

Ainsi dans le cadre de la gestion durable des écosystèmes forestiers d'Afrique Centrale, les programmes européens APFT "Avenir des Peuples des Forêts Tropicales" et ECOFAC "Conservation et Utilisation Rationnelle des Ecosystèmes Forestiers en Afrique Centrale" ont opté pour une cogestion des ressources naturelles entre les différentes parties prenantes. C'est ce qui justifie l'arrivée des anthropologues ou de manière générale, des sciences humaines dans le domaine ferme de la conservation.

Le programme européen APFT est un réseau de chercheurs européens et des pays ACP, travaillant ensemble pour le futur des peuples des forêts tropicales.

L'expérience de gestion participative par la mise en valeur du tourisme de vision de gorilles au niveau du sanctuaire crée par la population locale est novatrice en Afrique centrale à plusieurs titres:

- d'abord c'est un bon modèle de collaboration étroite entre les sciences humaines et le monde des conversationnistes;

- l'implication de la population et le rôle d'encadrement assuré par l'anthropologue;
- la structuration d'une association villageoise pour investir les revenus tirés du tourisme dans la création des infrastructures socioéconomiques afin de s'assurer un développement meilleur qu'auparavant;
- C'est la première fois que des paysans en milieu forestier d'Afrique Centrale décident de classer leurs terres ancestrales en zone de conservation et créés de fait un sanctuaire de gorilles dont les revenus générés par le tourisme les reviendront en partie.

C'est un exemple concret de la coopération au développement de l'Union européenne travers les programmes ECOFAC et APFT "Avenir des Peuples des Forêts Tropicales".

L'approche Lossi s'organise autour de l'intégration de la conservation et du développement économique et social, de la recherche et de l'analyse des approches de conservation et de développement.

## Introduction

### *Problématique de la gestion participative*

Depuis longtemps, et principalement en Afrique, l'Etat a conservé le monopole de la gestion des ressources forestières (faune et flore). Au fil du temps, il semble que ce privilège ne garantit en rien l'utilisation durable des ressources. Les modes traditionnels de gestion des ressources naturelles des populations locales ne sont pas très souvent pris en compte. Comme récrit BIRRAUX ZIEGLER P. (1997) *"Les environmentalistes de leurs côtes, parviennent difficilement à accepter que les ethnies non occidentales, sans pouvoir être qualifiées d'écologistes, ont développé une longue convivialité avec les écosystèmes qu'ils prétendent protéger"*. Or, nous savons tous, comme le souligne Pose D.A. (1995) que: *«chaque peuple possède un TEK c'est-à-dire, un ensemble de notions écologiques traditionnelles: Traditional Ecological Knowledge»*.

*«Pendant fort long temps et d'une façon générale, le savoir des populations locales a été ignoré ou méprisé par la quasi-totalité des scientifiques qui instruisaient et diffusaient leur vérité comme universelle»* (Michel PRINCET, 1994)

Les aires protégées actuelles ont été créées pour la plupart sans le consentement de la population, durant l'époque coloniale. L'une des conséquences de ces décisions unilatérales fut le plus souvent, l'expulsion (dans certains cas) des autochtones de leurs terres ancestrales. Ces aires protégées n'ont jamais profité tant sur le plan financier que culturel aux populations locales. Dans la quasi-totalité des cas, les maigres revenus générés



par le tourisme sont versés au niveau de l'institution centrale et il n'y a aucune retombée dans les villages. Face à ce mode de gestion centralisé, il nous semble difficile de faire accepter aux peuples du forêt leur participation à une gestion durable des ressources naturelles; notion qu'ils ont dans leur culture pourtant bien ancrée.

La situation a évolué positivement depuis un certain nombre d'années face à l'échec des méthodes de conservation de la biodiversité très dirigistes et qui, sans association de toutes les parties prenantes, ne garantissent en rien une gestion durable des ressources naturelles. COLCHESTER M. (1995) souligne que: des 1975, lors de sa douzième assemblée générale qui se tenait à Kinshasa (Congo Démocratique), l'UICN avait adopté une résolution qui reconnaissait la valeur et l'importance des modes de vie traditionnels et du savoir-faire qui leur permettait de vivre en harmonie avec leur environnement.

La résolution recommandait entre autres aux gouvernements de «*maintenir et d'encourager les méthodes traditionnelles et d'imaginer les moyens par lesquels les peuples indigènes pourraient faire de leurs terres des zones protégées sans renoncer pour autant à leur propriété ni à leurs droits fonciers*».

SACHS cite par BAHUCHET S. (1997), rappelle qu'au sommet de la terre tenu à Rio en juin 1992 (CNUED), une convention internationale sur la biodiversité a été adoptée et est entrée en vigueur en 1993. Celle-ci recommandé aux gouvernements de «*préserver les méthodes traditionnelles de conservation et d'utilisation durable de la diversité biologique et s'en inspirer aussi largement que possible, en associant pleinement les populations concernées leurs efforts*».

Le discours des décideurs politiques dans le domaine de la gestion des ressources forestières en Afrique a changé ils insistent actuellement sur une réelle participation (ou implication) des populations locales aux décisions concernant leurs ressources.

Il y a actuellement un retour au niveau des différents projets de conservation ou des entreprises d'exploitation forestière, une volonté manifeste de prendre en compte les connaissances autochtones pour une gestion durable des forêts, D'où toutes ces notions qui prolifèrent actuellement: **gestion participative, cogestion, gestion patrimoniale ...**

NGUINGUIRI J.C. (1997) explique ce changement d'attitude par des enjeux a deux niveaux: premièrement, la recherche d'alternatives aux politiques antérieures d'aménagement et deuxièmement les enjeux politiques à l'échelle internationale. Selon lui, cette cogestion, du point de vue pratique cherche à déboucher sur une allocation des ressources issue d'une interaction entre partenaires, d'une part, et de susciter un arrangement institutionnel à partir d'une logique émergente de la part des acteurs d'autre part.

## *Sanctuaire De Gorilles De Lossi (Congo Brazzaville)*

*(Expérience pilote de cogestion du patrimoine gorille)*

| ETAPES LOSSI                                                                                           | METHODOLOGIE                                                                                                                                                                                     | MOVENS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I GENESE                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Recherche sur l'habitation                                                                             | - Programme de Conservation<br>- Education environnementale<br>- Recherche                                                                                                                       | - Primatologues<br>- Agronome                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Adhésion de la population                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| II EXPERTISE de Faisabilité                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1. Identification des avant-                                                                           | - Inventaires des entités<br>- Identifications des relations<br>- les différents acteurs                                                                                                         | Financement APFT:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 2. Délimitation du sanctuaire                                                                          | - Rencontre avec les<br>- différentes<br>- entités                                                                                                                                               | - Qualification du chercheur<br>- Connaissance du milieu<br>- humain                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 3. Information des différentes<br>parties pré Nantes sur les<br>avantages et inconvénients             | - Focus group, entretiens<br>- semi-directifs, observations<br>- participantes, entretiens<br>- informels, animation de<br>- Circulation de l'information<br>- entre<br>- les principaux parties | - Temps (3 mois d'expertise)<br>- Maîtrise des deux langues de<br>- zone<br>- Bonne circulation de<br>- entre la Composante.<br>- l'Administration locale, la<br>- population et l'équipe des<br>- chercheurs (anthropologue et<br>- Drimatoloaue) |
| ETAPES LOSSI                                                                                           | METHODOLOGIE                                                                                                                                                                                     | MOVENS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| III SUIVI (encadrement)                                                                                | - Réunions formelles et<br>- avec les différentes parties<br>- prenantes                                                                                                                         | Financement ECOFAC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 1. Structuration de<br>l'association des<br>ayant-droits des terres de                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                  | - Durée de l'intervention: 2 ans<br>(contrat d'un an étalé sur 2                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 2. Elaboration de statuts de<br>l'association (par le comité<br>restreint)                             | - Clarification des droits et<br>- des uns et des autres                                                                                                                                         | - Bonne collaboration entre la<br>- Composante, les chercheurs,<br>- l'administration locale, le<br>- et la population ...                                                                                                                         |
| 3. Légitimation de la<br>ceremonie officielle de mise<br>place du comité restreint de<br>l'association | - Amener les entités à vivre<br>- partenaires autour du bien<br>- (le sanctuaire) ...                                                                                                            | - Respect mutuel entre les<br>- partenaires.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 4. Mise au point du projet<br>protocole d'accord de<br>sanctuaire entre les<br>parties prenantes.      | - Désengagement progressif<br>- l'anthropologue pour faciliter<br>- l'autonomisation du groupe                                                                                                   | - Moyens logistiques de la<br>- composante au service des<br>- partenaires en cas de besoin<br>- clairement identifie ...                                                                                                                          |

### ***Qu'est c'est que la gestion participative?***

Pour GRAZIA BorriniFeyerabend, (1997) la *“gestion participative”* ou *“co-gestion”* des aires protégées, est une forme de partenariat permettant aux différents acteurs intéressés de se partager les fonctions, les droits et les responsabilités relatives à la gestion d'un territoire ou d'une gamme de ressources jouissant d'un statut de protection.

Il poursuit en ces termes: le terme *“gestion participative”* (également *cogestion*, *gestion conjointe* ou *mixte*, *gestion multipartenaire* ou *accord conjoint de gestion*) décrit une situation dans laquelle toutes les parties prenantes intéressées par une aire protégée, ou une partie d'entre elles, sont associées à un degré important aux activités de gestion.

On ne peut parler de gestion participative que s'il y a un patrimoine commun à toutes les parties prenantes.

Cet outil est actuellement utilisé par des projets de conservation tels ECOFAC “Conservation et utilisation rationnelle des écosystèmes forestiers en Afrique Centrale” financé par l'Union Européenne et APFT “Avenir des Peuples des Forêts Tropicales”.

Ces deux projets expérimentent en Afrique centrale des modes de cogestion des ressources naturelles, qui diffèrent dans certains aspects des exemples du programme CAMPFIRE en Afrique australe.

CAMPFIRE a été créé en 1989. Sa philosophie est que “le village devrait être l'unité de gestion principale des ressources naturelles (que ce soit la terre ou la faune sauvage) ou, dans certains cas, le canton». Pour cela, il donne aux paysans le pouvoir de gérer leurs ressources naturelles et de les utiliser afin de forger leur propre développement rural. Tel est le cas de Sunungukai camp qui est le premier programme touristique gère par les communautés locales dans CAMPFIRE. Il faut reconnaître aussi l'effort fournit par les autorités Zimbabwéennes pour modifier leur législation en matière de gestion de la faune. Tel est le cas de la Loi de 1975 dont l'amendement de 1982 a permis aux villageois de gérer leurs ressources naturelles (CAMPFIRE et Africa Resources Trust, in canopée 1999).

C'est un exemple qui marche tant bien que mal dans le contexte socio-culturel zimbabwéen et qu'il ne faudrait pas transposer tel quel dans d'autres contextes culturels.

OzangaSangha, au sud-ouest de la forêt dense de la République Centrafricaine, est un lieu où les touristes peuvent observer facilement les gorilles de plaine, les éléphants et les bongo. Les revenus touristiques générés par cette activité reviennent à quarante pour cent à une ONG locale. Celle-ci gère les activités de développement communautaire (Canopée n°13, janvier, 1999).

En Centrafrique toujours, l'Union Européenne finance le Programme de Développement de la Région Nord (PORN). Celui-ci, concilie gestion de la

faune et chasse sportive par la création des zones cynégétiques villageoises. Les paysans bénéficient ainsi des retombées financières générées par la chasse sportive (Canopée n013, janvier, 1999).

Tous ces modèles ont pour objectif de faire bénéficier aux populations locales, les retombées financières générées par le tourisme. Mais le plus souvent, les aires protégées en question ont été créées par l'Etat et non à l'initiative de la population.

Le modèle ECOFAC avec l'expérience du sanctuaire de gorilles de Lossi est innovateur. Car, c'est la population appuyée par les conversationnistes, et les biologistes, qui demandent la création d'une aire protégée.

Le processus commencé par les recherches sur l'habituation des gorilles (biologistes) appuyés par le volet conservation (ECOFAC). La population s'y intéresse et l'anthropologue intervient pour la faisabilité et l'encadrement de la population. L'objectif reste le même qu'ailleurs, c'est-à-dire faire bénéficier les populations des retombées financières générées par le tourisme.

### ***Collaboration entre différents projets européens et autres pour une meilleure cogestion des ressources naturelles***

De nombreux projets de conservation ou de recherche évoluant dans le bassin forestier du Congo, prennent en compte tant bien que mal pour l'instant le facteur humain.

L'exemple le plus illustratif, est celui de ces deux projets de l'Union Européenne: APFT «Avenir des Peuples des Forêts Tropicales» et ECOFAC «Conservation et utilisation rationnelle des écosystèmes forestiers en Afrique centrale» qui travaillent en étroite collaboration sur le terrain.

APFT met l'accent sur le facteur humain: l'étude de l'homme du forêt et de son avenir dans un cadre pluridisciplinaire en privilégiant l'approche holistique des aspects aborde. APFT réalise entre autres des expertises anthropologiques pour venir en appui à ECOFAC. Ces études permettent à ECOFAC de mieux cerner la complexité de la réalité socio-culturelle des populations vivant dans et en périphérie des aires protégées ou il évolue. Ainsi, ECOFAC, peut «réajuster» sa politique de conservation et utilisation rationnelle des ressources naturelles.

Le programme ECOFAC expérimente la "gestion participative" qui selon Joiris D.V. (1996) varie suivant les aires protégées et donc, des contextes culturels différents. Voici ce qu'écrit à ce propos Aveling C., coordonnateur régional du programme ECOFAC cite par Nguingui J.C. (1997) *«ECOFAC essaie de mettre en œuvre plutôt une politique visant l'association des populations à une gestion durable des ressources afin de leur faire la démonstration de l'intérêt, pour eux, de la sauvegarde à long terme de ces milieux»*.

### *Autres exemples d'habitation des gorilles dans la sous-région*

Notons que d'autres exemples d'habitation de gorilles existent dans la région. L'Ouganda par exemple est très avancé dans ce domaine avec ses gorilles de montagnes qui attirent de nombreux touristes. Ce pays a profité de l'instabilité politique de ses voisins rwandais et congolais de Kinshasa. Il a vu arriver un afflux de touristes (6500 visiteurs dans la forêt de Bwindi en 1995, selon Butynski et Kalina 1998 cite par M. VIVES, Canopée n°19, 1999), ce qui n'est pas toujours facile à gérer dans le cadre du tourisme de vision des gorilles. Comme le témoigne ces écrits de Lanjouw A. (1998): *«la sévère réduction du tourisme au Rwanda et dans la ROC a mis sous pression l'industrie du tourisme de vision en Ouganda. Il n'y a que trois groupes de gorilles accessibles aux touristes en Ouganda: deux dans le parc de BINP et le troisième dans le parc National de Mahinga Gorilla. Ces pressions ont posé de nombreux problèmes en Ouganda et le PICG travaille avec UWA pour développer de meilleures procédures de réservation pour les touristes ainsi que des méthodes pour évaluer l'impact des visiteurs sur les parcs et les gorilles. De plus, le PICG et UWA sont en train d'habituer deux nouveaux groupes de gorilles pour essayer de répondre à la demande»*.

Plus proche du Congo Brazzaville, dans la réserve de DzangaSangha en République centrafricaine, l'activité d'habitation des gorilles existent aussi.

Nous rapportons ici les écrits de Melissa J. R. (1998) dans le numéro 12 des nouvelles sur la conservation des gorilles *“... l'équipe de Dian Doran, basée à Mondika dans le secteur de Ndoki au sud du parc, progresse en matière d'habitation de gorilles et de recherche sur leur socio-écologie. Allard Blom et ses collègues poursuivent eux aussi leurs efforts pour habituer les gorilles à l'éco-tourisme dans le secteur de Dzanga”*.

Il est clair que le gorille est un produit touristique très rentable. Au Rwanda par exemple, en 1989, le parc des volcans a généré plus d'un million de US \$ en permis d'entrée de visite de gorilles. Au Congo Démocratique voisin, le tourisme aux gorilles dans le parc du KahuziBiega associé à celui de Virunga rapportait approximativement 810.000 US\$ en 1990 (Weber, 1998 in Canopée n°13, 1999). Malgré la guerre, le Rwanda vient de renouer avec le tourisme en ce qui concerne les derniers gorilles de montagne.

Les exemples ci-dessus nous confortent dans l'initiative Lossi, Un autre facteur caractéristique de la Lossi, est le fait qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une zone incluse dans la réserve. Mais plutôt d'une zone des terres ancestrales qui, selon la volonté des populations locales est érigée en sanctuaire sous certaines conditions définies par les villageois eux-mêmes.

Cette initiative a un impact positif sur la conservation de la biodiversité, car les populations rurales sont désormais moins tentées par le braconnage en particulier pour l'espèce gorille et plus motivées pour conserver leur faune et leur flore précieuses ils ont compris que dans ce cas: un **animal (gorille)**

**vivant rapporte plus qu'un animal mort** et qu'ils peuvent léguer cet héritage à leur descendance.

### ***Gestion participative et tourisme de vision de gorilles à Lossi***

Nous décrivons ici notre expérience de terrain en matière de gestion participative. La démarche suivie ne correspond pas à certains de ses aspects moment aux schémas classiques dans ce domaine. Ce qui compte pour nous c'est le résultat, Nous sommes entièrement d'accord avec GRAZIA(1997) quand il dit qu'il n'y a pas de solutions universelles mais au contraire, une énorme variété de types selon les contextes spécifiques.

Ainsi nous pouvons classer cette expérience dans le cadre de **«adaptive management»**. Cette approche de gestion reconnaît le manque de connaissances univoques et définitives. La gestion est toujours expérimentale et le chercheur apprend de toutes les activités de gestion que l'on met en place. Ainsi, on peut améliorer la gestion selon ce qu'on apprend.

Notre exemple de Lossi dans la forêt Nord Congo est unique pour l'instant en Afrique centrale. Dans certains cas on a vu qu'il s'agit des aires protégées créées sans le consentement des populations. Ces dernières sont associées maintenant après plusieurs échecs de gestion autoritaire de l'Etat. Ce n'est pas le cas de Lossi. Ici la démarche est novatrice. Car ce sont les villageois qui demandent la création d'un sanctuaire de gorilles et qui mettent ainsi leurs terres au service de la conservation.

Pour ces villageois, cela constitue un moyen de valoriser l'espèce gorille (Intégralement protégée) de basse plaine dans le cadre de l'éco-tourisme avec leur participation afin de bénéficier des retombées financières et pour que cette expérience puisse profiter aux générations présente et futures.

La population a cédé une partie de ses terres à des chercheurs qui ont travaillé sur l'habitation de gorilles à la présence humaine. Vu le succès de ce travail d'habitation, cette même population avec beaucoup d'enthousiasme et en concertation avec le programme ECOFAC, a décidé d'ériger les terres de cette zone en sanctuaire de gorilles, destiné à l'éco-tourisme pour en tirer profit sur le plan financier.

### ***Situation géographique de Lossi***

Le sanctuaire de Lossi (00014'09N, 14°30'12E) se trouve à 24 km au sud de l'actuel village de LenguiLengui (Bermejo, 1995) et à pratiquement une journée de marche de la petite ville voisine de Kelle.

Le village moteur d'où est partie l'initiative s'appelle LenguiLengui (00027'12N, 014°31'59<sup>E</sup>) et se trouve à une distance de 22 km par rapport à

Mbomo qui est le centre de la Sous-préfecture et l'un des points de repères de la limite sud du Parc National d'Odzala (PNO).

***Milieu humain (composition ethnique, historique des déplacements et remembrement des villages ...)***

Les anciens habitants des terres de Lossi appartenaient au groupe ethnique appelé *Mboko Alengui*. Ils ont cette particularité de parler couramment les langues *Mboko*, *kota* et *MMti*. Ainsi, ils passent aisément au cours d'une conversation d'une langue à une autre. Ce fait explique leur double (ou triple origine) *Mboko*, *Mbeti* et parfois *Kota* selon le cas.

Ainsi, les ayant-droits des terres de Lossi, vivent actuellement dans des endroits différents, mais non loin du sanctuaire. Il s'agit de la Sous-préfecture de Mbomo, de Kelle et d'Etoumbi.

***Les moyens mis en œuvre par les sciences humaines***

Un anthropologue Congolais (auteur de l'article) a été engagé pour douze mois d'encadrement et de suivi étalés sur 2 ans.

La participation des sciences humaines au début du processus de création de ce sanctuaire est une approche nouvelle au Congo dans le classement, la délimitation et l'élaboration des statuts d'une aire protégée.

Si les frais d'expertise de faisabilité ont été payés par le projet APFT, ceux du travail d'encadrement sont à la charge d'ECOFAC via AGRER. C'est un bon exemple de collaboration entre les deux programmes pour une gestion durable des ressources naturelles dans le bassin congolais, avec prise en compte du facteur humain.

Nous avons travaillé auparavant dans la zone, avec l'avantage de parler couramment les langues locales *Mboko* et *Lingala*, utilisées par la population.

Il était nécessaire de s'imprégner sur le terrain, du travail d'habituation de gorilles. Pour cela nous avons rampe plusieurs fois dans les feuilles de marantacées avec les primatologues et les pisteurs pour observer les gorilles et nous nous sommes prêtes à de longues marches en forêt, Cette expérience a été utile, elle nous a permis de mieux comprendre le travail d'habituation et ses exigences pour informer la population. A chaque mission, nous discussions avec les primatologues. Ainsi nous nous mettons d'accord sur la démarche suivre et pourrions en rendre compte aux populations.



## Description du processus

### *Approche Méthodologique*

Nous avons utilisé plusieurs techniques d'enquête qui oscillent entre celles de l'anthropologie pure et des nutritionnistes ou des agronomes (animation rurales, entretiens individuels, focus group, causeries libres, observation participante et non participante, mapping participatif et les réunions).

### *Réunions*

Cette dernière technique a été beaucoup utilisée, car elles nous permettaient d'harmoniser les points de vue, de restituer les données de l'enquête et enfin de permettre à toutes les parties prenantes de dialoguer (population, ECOFAC, Ministère des Eaux et Forêts, Sous-préfecture et chercheurs).

Ainsi, de nombreuses réunions réunissant tous les acteurs ont été tenues. Le plus souvent, le procès-verbal de la réunion était rédigé par un représentant des ayant-droits. Mais le lendemain, nous étions encore obligés de répéter (ou plutôt expliquer) le contenu de la réunion en langue *Lingala* ou *Mboko* pour une bonne compréhension.

Les élites, qui ne sent que les fils des ayant-droits, sont impliqués et jouent pour l'instant un rôle positif.

## L'expertise anthropologique de faisabilité

Elle a permis de passer plus de deux mois sur le terrain (1996) pour entretenir les ayant-droits des terres Lossi résidents dans des endroits différents. Des explications ont été données sur les avantages et les inconvénients du sanctuaire.

Nous avons conclu notre expertise par une motivation sans égale dans la zone de la part des personnes enquêtées. Pour les ayant-droits, c'est une fierté qui est à l'origine de la jalousie de la part des autres habitants de la Sous-préfecture de Mbomo. Mais, cette population avait besoin d'un encadrement.

### *Délimitation du sanctuaire*

**Les ayant-droits ont délimité une zone d'environ 320 km<sup>2</sup>** (carte) en tenant compte de leurs besoins en ressources naturelles exploitables dans la zone.

Dans la culture Mboko, chaque terre porte un nom et appartient à une lignée. Les limites sont bien précises à partir des éléments naturels (cours

d'eau, ligne de crête, arbres ...). Ces différentes terres appartiennent à des lignages.

### ***Dénombrement du nombre des ayant-droits***

Ainsi, nous avons pu dénombrer 32 terres et actuellement 21 ayant-droits représentant leur lignage respectif. Ce travail a été mené à merveille grâce à deux ayant-droits de lenguiLengui, Richard Idami (actuellement Vice-président de l'association des ayant-droits) et Jean Marie Joseph Lekenie qui maîtrisent l'histoire des hommes et du forêt de Lossi. Le premier fut un grand chasseur d'éléphant dans la région. A cet époque, le système foncier très fonctionnel obligeait le chasseur à remettre après abattage d'un animal (gros animaux: éléphant, buffle, potamochère...), la part qui revenait au propriétaire de la terre (*onga tsenque*) sur laquelle l'animal a été abattu.

### ***Evolution actuelle du travail d'encadrement des paysans des terres de la Lossi par l'anthropologue***

Depuis le mois d'avril 1997, nous sommes charges de l'encadrement des ayant-droits.

L'Anthropologue joue le rôle de facilitateur entre la population et les autres partenaires impliqués dans ce travail (chercheurs primatologues, ECOFAC, administration locale, Ministère en charge des Eaux et Forêts ...). Nous séjournons pendant 2 à 3 semaines dans le village de LenguiLengui avec des brefs séjours d'une semaine maximum à Mbomo et Kelle OU résident d'autres ayant-droits.

Information: au début, il a fallu passer beaucoup de temps à expliquer à plusieurs reprises aux ayant-droits les avantages et les inconvénients du sanctuaire. Cette démarche se faisait de façon formelle (réunions) et informelle (causeries le soir sous le hangar du chef du village ou chez nous). Ce travail d'information a été très utile. Il nous a permis de faire comprendre à la population ce qu'on attendait d'eux dans le cadre de la gestion participative (cette notion mal comprise et qui apparaît encore pour les paysans comme la énième invention du blanc pour mieux exploiter les ressources qui sont dans les forêts d'Afrique).

Mise en place d'un comité restreint: pour rédiger les projets de statuts et règlements intérieurs du sanctuaire de gorilles et de l'association, qui une fois de plus, il faut le rappeler, est une innovation au Congo: les membres de ce comité restreint ont été désignés au cours d'une assemblée générale par les ayant-droits eux-mêmes.

La guerre civile du Congo Brazzaville est venue interrompre brutalement ce travail d'encadrement. Mais les pisteurs Congolais sont restés sur le site

pour continuer à suivre les gorilles. Lorsque nous sommes repartis en mars 1998 pour une mission de reconnaissance, grande fut notre surprise de constater le sérieux avec lesquelles villageois avaient protégé les installations du camp de Lossi.

Amendements des projets de statuts par les différentes parties prenantes (excepte le Ministère des Eaux et Forêts): nous avons récupéré au mois de juin 1997 (peu avant la guerre civile du Congo Brazzaville) auprès du comité restreint les statuts et règlements intérieurs du sanctuaire et de l'association. Notre travail a consisté à les faire amender auprès de toutes les parties prenantes.

Ce travail se faisait sous forme de réunions à LenguiLengui et Mbomo. Chaque article a été traduit en langue *Lingala* (une des langues vernaculaires du Congo) pour la bonne compréhension de tout le monde.

Le 2 Aout 1998: une réunion a été organisée à LenguiLengui en présence des chercheurs, d'un représentant d'ECOFAC et des Eaux et Forêts et de certains ayant droits pour l'amendement de statuts et le règlement intérieur du sanctuaire.

Ce fut l'occasion pour la primatologue d'expliquer la restriction de certaines activités dans le sanctuaire. Car certains ayant-droits veulent que la chasse au fusil soit permise sous certaines conditions. Ils ont évoqué pour cela des raisons d'ordre socio-culturelles. En effet, une fois par année, ils doivent traverser Lossi pour se rendre à Kelle afin d'assister aux cérémonies de circoncision (*Ikinda* en Mboko ou *Itsinda* en Kota). Avant la création du sanctuaire, Lossi était l'endroit idéal pour chasser afin d'amener à Kelle du gibier à vendre afin de se procurer un peu d'argent. Les ayant-droits ont été convaincus par les explications techniques de la primatologue et cet article a été enlevé.

Le 4 octobre 1998: les ayant-droits de Lossi résidents à Kelle ont apportés leurs amendements.

Ainsi, nous avons de commun accord avec toutes les parties prenantes, arrêté une date pour la réunion générale de légitimation de ces textes et de mise en place du bureau exécutif de l'association des ayant-droits.

## **Légitimation des accords**

Ainsi, le 30 octobre 1998: le lieu symbolique de la Lossi regroupa tous les ayant-droits venus de Mbomo, LenguiLengui et Kelle. Monsieur le Sous-Préfet de Mbomo (autorité politique de la zone) a fait le déplacement pour présider cette réunion et légitimer les accords conclus entre les parties prenantes locales avant de transmettre les dossiers au niveau central.

Le bureau de l'association a été mis en place par le sous-préfet et les projets de textes adoptée après amendements par toutes les parties prenantes.

Le rituel se termina par un apéritif dans une ambiance conviviale.

Le procès-verbal fut transmis au Ministère, qui n'a pas tardé à envoyer en janvier la première mission chargée d'entamer le processus de classement de l'aire protégée.

20 janvier 1999: élaboration et adoption d'un projet du protocole de gestion du sanctuaire entre tous les acteurs, en présence de l'autorité politique de la Sous-préfecture. Ce protocole fut élaboré après une réunion d'explication, animée par les représentants du Ministère.

Ce projet prévoit en termes de partage des revenus générés par le tourisme, 50% à l'Etat (revenant au sanctuaire), 25% à la communauté locale (activités caractère communautaire: pharmacie villageoise, école ...), 15% à l'administration locale et 10% aux ayant-droits.

Nous nous sommes déplacés avec la délégation auprès des ayant-droits de Kelle et du Préfet de la Région pour information.

## **Bilan des acquis et analyse**

Habitude de gorilles: actuellement deux familles de gorilles sont habituées.

Le groupe Apolo (22 individus) est le plus facile à observer. Des pisteurs originaires de la localité au des environs (Kelle) ont été formés par le couple de primatologues. Ce sont eux, qui tant bien que mal ont poursuivi le travail pendant et après la guerre civile du Congo Brazzaville.

Structuration de l'association des ayant-droits et début d'autonomisation: le bureau de huit membres, a commencé petit à petit à se substituer à l'anthropologue (ils prennent le relais). Ce bureau a organisé des réunions avec les autres ayant-droits et la population à titre d'information et de concertation pour arrêter le calendrier de travail de la piste Lengui Lengui Lossi. Il assure la sensibilisation de la population contre les actes de braconnage dans le sanctuaire et ses environs.

Implication des autorités politico-administratives et ministérielles: elles sont informées de toutes nos démarches et associées, selon le cas. Le Sous-Préfet de Mbomo préside les réunions importantes.

Retombées financières: elles ne sont pas très importantes pour l'instant. Nous avons remis aux ayant-droits au mois d'Octobre le montant de 90.000 FCFA correspondant à leur part des revenus générés par la visite de 18 touristes. Nous étions très heureux de remarquer que pour les villageois ce qui compte c'est le geste, ils misent sur des lendemains meilleurs.

Il est vrai que la situation du Congo actuellement ne permet pas de miser à court terme sur la venue des touristes; mais la Composante ECOFAC Congo nous a confié la mission de proposer en concertation avec les populations des activités alternatives en attendant le passage de la crise.

Malgré l'absence des retombées financières, la population vient de travailler bénévolement pour l'ouverture de 16 kilomètres de piste en forêt (LenguiLengui Lossi).

Construction du campement touristique de Lossi: depuis la mi-mai 1999, les ayant-droits appuyés par ECOFAC CONGO, participent à la construction de deux cases, un restaurant pour les touristes et une case pour les chercheurs. Ainsi, les frais de location de ces cases reviennent directement à l'association des ayant-droits des terres de Lossi.

Surveillance du sanctuaire: les ayant-droits ont décidé de limiter les actes de braconnage dans le sanctuaire.

Dans cet esprit, un des ayant-droits qui avait son campement de chasse dans le sanctuaire (Rivière *Lebangot*, joue le rôle de sensibilisateur.

Il signale au Sous-Préfet et aux membres du bureau les noms des braconniers récalcitrants. Des jeunes ont voulu organiser des patrouilles volontaires. Mais nous avons interdit cela à cause des dangers potentiels que ce genre d'expéditions comporte.

En effet, le sanctuaire n'a pas encore un statut légal et le processus est en cours au niveau du gouvernement.

Pour l'instant les actes de braconnage ne perturbent pas la bonne marche de la recherche sur l'habitation.

## **Bilan des problèmes et soutien des partenaires extérieures**

Il n'a pas été facile de convaincre les ayant-droits dans le cadre des travaux bénévoles d'intérêt général. Par exemple, l'entretien de la piste et de la maison des chercheurs à LenguiLengui. Au début, ils réclamaient des perdiem pour ce genre de travaux.

Mais depuis l'installation du comité restreint (bureau) de l'association des ayant-droits et après de nombreux débats, la mobilisation de la population pour les travaux collectifs se fait à merveille. Ainsi, dans cette lancée, il a été décidé la réouverture (bénévolément) de la piste LenguiLengui Lossi depuis le mois de novembre 1999.

La population reçoit de temps en temps la visite du chef de Composante ECOFAC Congo et de son homologue Congolais. La dernière visite en date fut celle des membres de la délégation de l'Union Européenne (DGVIII: MM. ZIMMER, PIRONIO ...)

Ce manque de motivation pour les travaux collectifs a eu des répercussions sur la composante qui était déçue et a failli suspendre l'aide multiforme à cette initiative.

Nous avons tenu de nombreuses réunions avec la population. L'ultimatum de 3 mois a été un véritable coup de fouet pour que la population se décide à faire quelque chose pour prouver sa bonne foi.

Le nombre d'ayant-droits est passé de 15 au début à 21 maintenant, parce que certains ayant-droits avaient délégué leur pouvoir à un d'entre eux. Au fur et à mesure de l'évolution du programme et des enjeux futurs, la délégation du pouvoir a été retirée et chacun veut être présent.

La durée de l'encadrement nous a permis de corriger certaines erreurs. Ainsi, le nombre de terres est passé de 32 à 39.

## **Perspective Et Recommandations**

Ce modèle est intéressant car, il allie conservation et participation de la population. Il faut surtout souligner, une grande motivation au niveau de la conservation. Et aussi, un bon esprit de dialogue et de compréhension mutuelle sans complexe entre le chef de la Composante ECOFAC Congo, les primatologues, l'anthropologue et la population locale.

Le maintien de l'anthropologue sur le terrain sur une période assez longue a permis de mieux comprendre et parfois de corriger ou gérer les différents conflits d'intérêt qui naissent au fur et à mesure de l'évolution du programme.

La réussite pour l'instant de ce programme, tient au fait que la zone du sanctuaire est située très loin des finages villageois. Elle n'est devenue qu'une zone de transition entre deux grands villages. En clair, il n'y a pas d'empiètement sur les terroirs agricoles et de chasse.

Ce modèle n'est pas replicable directement dans d'autres contextes. Car à chaque contexte culturel, il y a une réalité différente.

Il est aussi nécessaire pour l'anthropologue de ne pas se lasser à répéter les réunions en langue locale, d'avoir beaucoup d'entretiens informels individuels avec les différents acteurs.

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# Social Dimensions and Consequences of Environmental Degradation in the Niger Delta of Nigeria: Suggestions for the Next Millennium

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## Abstract

*The problem of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta is real, severe, enormous, critical, precarious and is presently calling for both national and global attention.*

*This study sought to investigate the social dimensions of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta. The aim of the study is threefold:*

- *First, to investigate empirically the real issues at stake and the extent of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta;*
- *Second, to present an accurate picture of the social dimensions of environmental degradation; and*
- *Third, to suggest some categorical imperatives that will help to alleviate the identified social problems emanating from the impact of environmental degradation.*

*The study made use of both primary and secondary sources of data. The three sources of data include:*

- 1) *The literature;*
- 2) *Observation; and*
- 3) *In depth interview. These multiple methods were adopted in order to enrich the quality of the data collected for the study.*

*The study concluded by saying that something concrete must be done by both the government and the oil companies to cushion the effects of environmental degradation on the lives of the peoples of the Niger Delta, as all people have a right to a generally satisfactory environment favourable to their survival and development.*

## Introduction

Over the past four decades, as oil industries spread their operations in the Niger Delta, the physical environment has come increasingly under threat.

Many social commentators, observers and the indigenes of the oil communities regard the destruction of the environment as the greatest danger facing the people of the Niger Delta presently. The situation is critical, tragic and devastating.

Both Anthropology and Sociology, at different times in the past, have been conceived as disciplines that will help to reorganize human societies and at the same time make it a better place for the individuals and groups within it. The long-run aim of both disciplines is to discover the basic structure of human society, to identify the main forces that hold groups together or weaken them, and to learn what conditions transform social life. In this, Anthropology and Sociology, like the other social sciences, are a disciplined intellectual quest for fundamental knowledge of the nature of things. It is our belief that both Anthropology and Sociology, in a critical volatile and precarious situation such as that of the people of the Niger Delta, have crucial roles to play by studying the situation critically and analysing the issues at stake. This is with a view to highlight the social dimensions of environmental degradation and then proceeds to sensitize the government about the inevitable need to alleviate the associated problems.

### **Social Significance of the Study**

The logical question to be asked now is why should the environment be a matter of concern for Anthropologists and Sociologists? Aren't we talking about issues that are in the province of scientists, biologists, zoologists etc.? The answers to these questions are quite immediate. Even though the environment is physical, this notwithstanding, man's interaction with the environment has its social dimensions, implications and consequences which deserve the attention of Anthropologists and Sociologists.

According to Ian (1980), since the 20th century, social scientists have been systematically applying ecological principles to the study of human societies and populations. Anthropologists have found the ecological approach a useful means of analysing human cultural arrangements. The subsistence strategy that a society uses to exploit its environment (hunting and gathering, pastoralism, horticulture, agriculture, or industrialism) has important effects on social structure and culture. Sociologists have also been deeply interested in human ecology, the interrelationship between human groups and their natural environment. It is obvious that people want an end to the ecological degradation in the Niger Delta region as they have been going through hell for so long. This inevitably makes the study of environmental degradation categorically important.

## Statement of the Problem

For the people of the Niger Delta, ecological disaster is discernible and crying for solution. From Warri to Calabar, the people cannot farm or fish because of oil spills and pollution, they cannot drink good water and their health is in jeopardy. The ecological problem in the Niger Delta is that Nigeria has exploited the ecosystems for resources beyond the level of sustainability. (Ashton Jones et al 1998). The environment has been exploited and damaged and unable to continue to produce the resources that people of the oil communities need. The ecological problem then, is a reality which has to be faced. But, it is a problem which, in the end, has no simple solution because there are just so many people wanting to survive: each of whom has an equal right to do so.

It is a known fact that 90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings which form the mainstay of the Nigerian economy are derived from petroleum products. It is therefore an irony of fate that the area which produces the bulk of the oil on which Nigeria depends for survival and development is about the least developed of all the geopolitical zones of the country. Infrastructural facilities in most parts of the Niger Delta area are in the main at the most primordial levels. Ecological disasters resulting from oil exploration have laid the land waste, made it impossible to have potable drinking water and passable road networks. Fishing, the lifeline of most inhabitants of the area is almost made impracticable and unprofitable as a result of incessant oil spills, leading to pollution and other hazards of oil exploration. Again, fishing nets running into several thousands of naira get destroyed as a result of oil spills. The resulting can easily be imagined losses. This again has had a negative impact on the quality of life of the average person in the Niger Delta. The people feel deprived of their God-given wealth, alienated from the polity and disillusioned about the concept of Nigeria.

Ashton James et al (1998) argued that there is no doubt that the oil industry has a significant adverse environmental impact upon the Niger Delta. This not only damages human ecosystems leading to deprivation and environmental health problems, but it also distorts social conditions. This distortion of social conditions in turn influences political conditions in terms of people's views about their ability to change the society in which they live and the degree to which these views translate into tension between different groups within society.

The World Banks' observations in a 1990 report titled: National Environmental Action Plan: Towards the Development of an Environmental Action Plan for Nigeria about the oil industry is very revealing. According to

this report, "... oil wells are located throughout the rural areas. Chronic leaks result in widespread destruction of fishing and agricultural resources. Oil exploitation has contributed significantly to the deforestation of the state. Between 1979 and 1989, there were 784 reported significant incidents of oil pollution and in some cases, marine life was completely destroyed in the affected areas of Delta, Edo, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, and Ondo states. Pollution also is attributed to spills, washing of tankers, dredging, moving of heavy equipments and deballasting".

Finally, there is the problem associated with compensation. According to Aturu (1998) the attitude of the judiciary to the question of compensation for the victims of environmental degradation has been frustrating. Very few are the cases in which the courts have awarded damages to victims of oil spills and other disastrous after-effects of the activities of the oil companies. And the damages are so paltry and insulting that they do not cover the litigation expenses. The conservation attitude of the judges weaned on the common law on environmental issues and litigation has recently attracted scholarly condemnation.

From the foregoing discussions, it is categorically clear that the government cannot feel unconcerned and insensitive about the pain, agony, deprivation, neglect and the suffering which the peoples of the Niger Delta are going through as a result of the degradation of the environment. This is the rationale and the main motivation for this study.

## **Methodology**

### **Design**

Three main instruments of data collection were adopted in this study. These are (1) the literature (2) In depth interview and (3) Observation. The researcher made field visits to various locations in the Niger Delta. In depth interviews were conducted on randomly selected samples of respondents at the various locations. The three methods of data collection were simultaneously adopted in order to enrich the quality of the data obtained for the study.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The first social problem identified is that unemployment resulting largely from environmental degradation. Incessant oil spills and pollution disrupted some of the traditional occupations of people of the Niger Delta, the main ones being farming and fishing. As a matter of fact, pollution of farmlands, fishing streams, deforestation, corrosive erosion have all been traced to the oil

exploitation and the production activities of the oil companies in the Niger Delta. A direct fall out from this is that most people whose main occupations are farming and fishing have thus been deprived of their source of livelihood. As a matter of fact, some fishermen showed fish nets which have been destroyed in the incessant oil spills. A lot of farm crops and lands were also destroyed in several instances.

An associated problem resulting from environmental degradation and unemployment is that of poverty. The high level of unemployment in the Niger Delta has impoverished the people. Apart from impoverishing the people, it has also led to continuous deterioration in the quality of life. Although there are several millions of poor people in the other parts of the country, this notwithstanding, poverty tends to be at its worst in the Niger Delta region. Malnutrition, lack of education, sub-standard housing, acute shortage of social infrastructures and the like are generally most severe in the Niger Delta.

Secondly, environmental degradation is also accompanied by pollution which endangered life and species and creates a variety of health hazards. Oil pollution is an epidemic throughout the Niger Delta. Health wise, women and children are more susceptible to diseases than men. When the air, seas and farmlands are polluted, there is bound to be an outbreak of diseases. In the Niger Delta, there has been increased incidence of certain diseases like bronchial asthma, upper respiratory tract diseases, gastroenteritis, cancer, and children are hard of hearing due to the noise from the flaring of gas. Noise arises from the generations of the drilling camp and operation. Ashton Jones et al (1998) stated that high noise levels could be annoying, disturbing and injurious living close to oil installations. The impact of gas flaring most especially horizontal gas flaring on air pollution is critical. Again, in human terms much of the water in the Niger Delta is so polluted that illness and death from waterborne diseases are part of life. The most common waterborne illnesses are diarrhoea, dysentery and cholera, and there is the ever-present danger of typhoid and guinea worm infection. Moreover, parts of the Niger Delta are suitable environments for bilharzia and river blindness. Giddens (1996) argued that some forms of pollution produce health hazards. And as such, the protection of the environment thus forms part of programs of preventative medicine. However, the contrary is the case in the Niger Delta where both the oil companies and government are not doing anything concrete to stop oil pollution and gas flaring. There are no appropriate local controls over pollution and flaring.

Thirdly, the youths radicalized by years of unfulfilled government promises and their inability to find gainful employment have resorted to violence and

armed struggles. In the last decade, there have been several violent demonstrations by youths in the Niger Delta, as this seems to be the only language that the government understands. As a matter of fact, there have been several face-to-face battles between the youth and the members of the armed forces in the Niger Delta. The recent violence in Bayelsa state after the expiration given the government to implement the terms of the December 1998 'Kaiama declaration' is a glowing example. If the government does not open up avenues for dialogue, the youth think violence is the only way to open a communication channel. This development is not in any way desirable, as the youth are now getting tutored and socialized in the culture of violence.

Fourthly, the environmental degradation of the Niger Delta has also meant both social and physical dislocation for the people as some oil communities have had to relocate in the past when the environment became endangered for human habitation. Invariably, social dislocation leads to loss of tradition, norms, customs, values, and deprivation of group identity and social cohesion as people will be dispersed into different locations. Physical dislocation also means that people are separated from their natural and physical Environment, that is, the environment which they know and in which they grew up.

Environmental degradation has also been accompanied by lots of deaths. A large number of youths and even the aged have died as a result of the incessant violent protests, demonstrations and open confrontation with the security forces. Again, government security forces on several occasions raided the oil communities spreading terror, violence and death. Several deaths have been recorded in the past in the Ogoni crises, the Warri disturbances and the recent Bayelsa imbroglio in

December, 1998. People are also dying as a result of the prevalent poverty and malnutrition which are direct consequences of environmental degradation. There is the land dimension of Environmental degradation. Useable agricultural land in the Niger Delta was reduced drastically since oil exploitation started. Aluyor (1998) stated that farmlands in the Niger Delta have been made infertile and unproductive due to frequent oil spills that are never cleaned up properly. Some lands are lost with no possibility of ever being redeemed; to forest and agricultural use. Again the traditional modes of agriculture are integrated within the local environment in such a way as to encourage the regular renewal of its crop bearing capacities but this has been disrupted by the degradation of the environment, thus spelling doom for the people.

In addition to the above, several laws have also been put in place preventing the people from having total control over their Environment and the resources appropriated from it. From the Petroleum Decree 51 of 1969 to



the Land Use Decree of 1978 down to the Inland Waterway Authority Decree 52 of 1993, the attempt has been to vest control of the resources of the indigenous peoples of the Niger Delta in the hands of an unsympathetic central government that looks the other way while oil companies continue to destroy their environment. The people alleged that governmental agencies such as Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA) and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) looked the other way while statutory provisions and regulations for the protection of the environment which they are charged to ensure compliance with are breached with impunity by these oil companies.

After critically examining the situation and identifying the social dimensions of the problem, we observed that presently no concrete efforts are being made by the government to redress the problems of Environmental degradation in the Niger Delta. Rather, the government has been using the instruments of coercion like the security agencies, divide and rule tactics and other state apparati to suppress the people. This governmental reaction is clearly and totally against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter of Human and People Rights.

From this background and in order to ensure peaceful coexistence in the Nigerian polity, as we stand on the threshold of the next millennium, the following categorical imperatives were suggested:

- The people of the Niger Delta must be the first beneficiaries of whatever resources are harnessed from their environment. The people deserve some form of compensation for the loss that accompanied the degradation of their environment; The government must put an end to all environment and human rights abuses in the Niger Delta;

- The government must create an avenue for dialogue with the people of the Niger Delta in order to know their dreams, wishes and aspirations and what they believe should be their status in the Nigerian nation;

- The establishment of Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) is a step in the right direction. This agency should, however, be made more functional and headed and predominantly staffed by people from the Niger Delta areas who will know and understand the plight, travails and the problem of the people. Again, this will take good care of government insensitivity to the plight of the people;

- Prospective oil companies should as a matter of compulsion is made to reserve a certain quota or percentage of their staff allocation for indigenes of the communities where they are located. The logic of this line of reasoning is that when people are denied or deprived of the traditional occupations

practicable in their Environment, then they should be given alternative employment by the oil communities that degraded their Environment. It is when youths cannot find gainful employment that they resort to violence;

- The issues raised in the Ogoni Bill of Rights (1990) and the Kaiama Declaration (1998) must be thoroughly addressed through dialogue and not through coercion or intimidation. After all both the Ogoni Bill of Rights and the Kaiama Declaration are not wars nor threats of violence but the need to peacefully secure the control of the natural resources and the right to self-determination.

- All the armed wings and activists in the Niger must be dissolved. This includes the Niger Volunteer Force (NDVF) the Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC) and the 'Egbesu boys', the Pan Niger Resistant Movement (CHIKOKO) and others. Our stand is that at the threshold of the next millennium, it is better to settle and resolve conflicts through dialogue, peaceful avenues and round table conferences rather than through violence and armed struggles. At all times, all peaceful avenues must be explored first before thinking of any other measures;

- The Niger Delta must be well developed and be made to feel governmental presence most especially in terms of social infrastructures. We hereby suggest the establishment of schools at all levels of learning, hospitals, network of roads, communication facilities, and finally the construction of gas turbines to generate and supply electricity to all towns and villages in the oil-producing communities. We also suggest the establishment of a "Truth and Retribution Commission" to address squarely and at all fronts the injustices of the past;

- That oil companies operating in Nigeria must be held peacefully to global Environmental justice standards;

- That all unjust laws like the Land Use Decree, the petroleum Decree and similar laws which deny the people their rights and resources be removed from our statute books;

- That in the spirit of reconciliation all those held in connection with the demands of the oil communities for justice be released without further delay;

- That all military task forces, including those set up ostensibly to combat crime but which have become ready tools of terror and pacification in the oil communities be scrapped or withdrawn.

## **Conclusion**

It is an established fact that oil exploitation in the Niger Delta has resulted in environmental degradation, economic impoverishment and cultural

destabilization. There is no doubt that today, with the stated horrendous policies, the peoples of the Niger Delta and their communities have been reduced to scavengers in the midst of their wealth.

Again, it is both sad and unfortunate that successive governments who have ruled the country have more often than not treated the Niger Delta area as a colony fit only for what can be taken out of it. From this background, it is important that something urgent must do to alleviate the pains, sufferings and the agony of the people of the Niger Delta.

One thing is clear; Man cannot live his life to the fullest potential in a degraded environment. On this note, we therefore conclude by adopting the Article 24 of the African Charter of Human and People's Rights which states that:

*“All people shall have a right to a generally satisfactory environment favourable to their development”*

This African Charter is superior to all military decrees and all other legislation by any particular member state of the Organization of African Unity. And as such, Nigeria has no other rational option but to implement the contents of this charter. It is envisaged that the implementation of this charter will go a long way to alleviate the sufferings of the peoples of the Niger Delta.

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## Aspect of Ungwal Agriculture: An Anthropological Analysis

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### Abstract

*Agriculture is the main occupation of the Ungwai people of Niger State of Nigeria. This mode of subsistence is, however, more than a mere economic affair. It is indeed a way of life embracing such things as social, political, historical and ecological activities. For example, the concept of work-group features prominently in the scheme of things. This mode of living (which is centred on cooperation and understanding) fosters unity and peace among the people. Crops being grown include sorghum, millet and yams, while such livestock as cattle, goats and sheep are also kept. Droppings of these animals are used for enriching the soil. This is a powerful indigenous soil maintenance strategy that has been enhancing food production among the Ungwal. Oral traditional, ethnographic and archaeological investigations carried out to-date in the region show that the Ungwal farming practices can be traced as far back in time as about 18th century A.D.*

### Introduction

The Ungwal people are one of the major ethnic groups in Niger State of Nigeria.

They are located to the northern part of Minna, the capital town of the state (Niger) (See Fig. 1). The vegetation of the area is tropical woodland savannah. On the banks of rivers and streams such as Koriga, Mariga and Kaduna are gallery forests made up of trees including bamboo so closely linked together that their crowns actually touch one another. One of these trees is Butyrospermum paradoxum (Shea butter tree) (Dalziel 1937: 14-37; Keay 1959: 5-32; Ogundele 1995:3-5). This vegetation is a reflection of the prevailing climatic conditions which can be explained against the background of the mean annual rainfall as well as its distribution; the severity of the dry season as well as the local farming systems; bush burning and types of soils.

Food and shelter are two of the basic needs of man the world over. It is therefore not surprising that human beings have over the years been formulating many strategies and models for ensuring a successful exploitation

of the diverse plant and animal resources in their specific environments. It is common knowledge that the transition from the full-time hunting and gathering mode of economy to food production or domestication in prehistory was one of the greatest advances ever made by man (Clark 1970; Henry 1985; Sutton 1969). However, the recognition of the fact that much cannot be known or appreciated (in the face of paucity of relevant data) about ancient farming systems of the Ungwal people of Nigeria, has encouraged the application of an ethno-archaeological model. This involves a study of the present-day agricultural practices of the people, types of crops being grown and food processing as well as preservation methods. Plane-table mapping of some ethnographic settlements was done with a view to generating some models to be tested against the archaeological spatial distribution maps. In fact, the nature of conceptualization of space by the Ungwal cannot be neatly separated from their modes of farming.

Ethnographic research carried out so far in the study area has revealed two types of farms as follows:

- 1) Compound/Home Farms;
- 2) Bush/Distant Farms.

Home farms are usually located at the peripheries of each compound. The crops commonly grown are peppers, onions, different kinds of leaf greens, tobacco and yams, among others. These farms are usually smaller in size than the distant or bush farms. In addition, children and their mothers are very fond of farming at the peripheries of their compounds. However, there is no regulation stopping anyone from planting whatever he/she likes within a given settlement unit. Only members of a given compound are allowed to farm near their settlement.

The latter type of farm (bush farm) may be as far afield as 400 meters or more from the compound where the farmer concerned lives. Such farms are larger in size than the compound /home farms. Sometimes people go to their collateral kinsmen to do farming. However, they return to their compounds at the end of each day's work, usually in the evening. Movements within a clan (e.g. Kabitu) territory for farming do not automatically attract some form of payment either in cash or kind. It is therefore not a surprise that allocation of space to each individual necessarily involves an intricate socio-political network. Here, the elders and compound heads of neighbouring Ungwai communities are responsible, in the main, for working out some arrangements for land sharing for cultivation purposes. In this respect equity and fair play remain the guiding principles. This is an attempt to reduce frictions among the people to the barest minimum. In case of land disputes, among other things,

the council of eiders as well as some priests especially of the maigiro deity wades in as soon as possible in order to bring about peace and harmony. Communal clashes are therefore uncommon among the Ungwai.

Hill farming is not a common practice today in Ungwailand. This, according the local information is quite unlike the situation during the pre-colonial and colonial times, when hill slopes and hill-tops were being farmed. This mode of farming involves some limited terracing. Relics of such terracing can still be found in the region today. This period witnessed a lot of socio-political upheavals which invariably made hill-top settlements inevitable. The Ungwai people are very fond of practicing animal husbandry. Indeed, a compound is usually full of a wide variety of livestock such as cows, goats, sheep, pigeons, ducks, fowls and dogs.

Cattle are kept in some enclosures constructed with guinea-corn stalks usually located at the periphery of a settlement. These cattle graze on the surrounding community land during the day time with one or two herdsmen depending on their (cattle) number. Fowls are kept in coops which are the raised bases of granaries. Cow dung, poultry droppings and vegetable wastes are often used as manure to sustain the soils, particularly the home farms which are usually small-sized and located directly behind the compounds. These wastes are spread over the site to be farmed after which mounds or heaps are made. Both sexes are involved with the application of manure. Even children of working age are not left behind. Investigations reveal that this aspect of Ungwai soil maintenance culture is of considerable antiquity, stretchable to the period of hill-top occupation, when intensive system of farming was most inevitable. It is an effective means of coping with an intensive the system of agriculture, which can be explained against the background of increasing population pressure upon the land. As a result of this, soil maintenance strategies have been recording high crop yields annually without the application of inorganic fertilizer which is generally expensive.

Clearing of land for cultivation is usually done by both men and women, although the former is more actively involved. After clearing, branches and trunks of felled trees are cut into manageable lengths and collected by the women and children alike. These pieces are then sold as firewood. They are carried to the road sides for sale. In fact, firewood selling is a lucrative part-time business for most Ungwai women.

The hoeing of mounds is mainly done by the men, while the women usually take an active part in planting, weeding and harvesting of crops.

The Ungwai people irrespective of sex are largely subsistence farmers (See Fig. 2). They cultivate rice among other crops in the swampy and apparently very fertile areas of the surrounding plains. A considerable part of the plains



always has cow dung resulting from grazing. This dung gets mixed up with the soils thereby increasing their (Soils') level of fertility for agricultural purposes. Around mid-August when bush clearing starts in readiness for a new planting season, the bush is turned into a bee-hive of activities, entailing singing and cracking of jokes by the working party.

As the men are busy clearing the bush, the women also continue removing the branches and trunks of trees and taking them to the road sides for sale later as firewood. The practice of tree-felling on a large-scale for cultivation purposes and as a source of fuel for both the rural and urban dwellers, is now being discouraged by the government. This is because of the alarming rate at which some considerable portions of the area are being transformed into a near-desert situation. This openness leads to more active water and wind erosion with the attendant problem of rendering parts of the plains useless for agricultural purposes in the near future.

The clearing of sites for cultivation and the mounding which is a follow-up exercise, are normally done on a work-group basis. This is an age-long subsistence strategy that is also common among the rural Yoruba people of South-western Nigeria. Wives of the Ungwaiman whose site is being cleared and mounded, bring food and drinks (water and/or burukutu -local beer prepared from millet or guinea corn) to the men at work. This socio-economic arrangement (work-group system) ensures that every serious-minded man has a large farm which will enable him to take good care of his family among others when the crops are harvested. This cooperative and communalistic way of life remains the backbone of the Ungwai indigenous personality which must be preserved and promoted for posterity.

Oral traditional information has it that this work-group system is an age-long practice useful for enhancing the survival and prosperity of the people. It helps to foster unity among the Ungwai communities who see themselves as belonging to "one family". Much mounding is normally done before the dry season sets in. This is because during the dry season, the soil becomes very compact, thereby making hoeing extremely difficult. However, not every farmer is ready with mounding even as late as the commencement of the new rainy season (late March/early April). Seedyams are usually planted in February and some farmers continue this exercise well into the rainy season. After the planting, dried grass as well as leaves are put on top of the mounds before they are weighted down with clods of soil. This grass cap has a dual purpose as follows:

1. To protect the sprouting yams from being damaged by the sun;
2. To prevent the mounds from water erosion when rains commence fully.

Such crops as peppers, beans and cotton are sometimes interplanted with yams. This is however done when rain has started to fall regularly (usually from the month of May upwards). Harvesting of yams starts in early July and this process may continue up to late November. Immediately after this first rains, guinea-corn is planted and this is usually interplanted with millet. Harvesting can take place after about two and a half months. In practical terms, the crops (guinea-corn and millet) are ready by June.

### **Crop Processing and Preservation Strategies**

After the harvesting of crops such as yams, beans, rice and guinea-corn, the men, women and the children of working age carry them to their compounds. In most cases, big calabashes are used to carry the yams and beans while guinea-corn and rice plants (specifically the 'upper sections carrying the grains) are cut and arranged in bundles and then taken home. As far as yams are concerned, those that are not needed for either immediate consumption or sale, are buried in trenches (varying in depth between 60 and 100 cm, depending on the number and sizes of yams involved) within the farm or taken to yam storage structures. Ashes are normally strewn into the storage pits for yams before they (the pits) are covered with earth. After this, leaves and grasses are put on top of them. All these efforts are aimed at ensuring maximum preservation of the yams. Some yams are taken home to be kept in storage structures (either rectangular or square in shape). These structures are constructed mainly with guinea-corn stalks and located at the peripheries of compounds (Plate 1).

Care is always taken not to injure such yams. This is necessary to ensure better preservation. Yams buried in trenches may last for between 2 and 4 months, while those kept in storage structures can be preserved up to 7 months. Storing yams in trenches is, however, subject to menace of thieves who may come and remove them usually at night, if they (the yams) are not carefully buried. Local information has it that some desperate thieves today do not bother about the consequences of the wrath of the maigiro by going ahead to steal. It is important to note that the maigiro is a powerful local deity of the Ungwai. The Ungwai people up to now, acknowledge the fact that the maigiro can bring criminals to book, same as it can protect the law-abiding members of a given community from dangerous diseases such as mental disorders, epilepsy and paralysis.

Cereals like guinea-corn and millet are usually threshed before being stored in granaries (See Plate 2). Similarly, beans are removed from their outer covering in readiness for storage. The threshing is basically done by the

women and their children who often get excited about this exercise. Each compound is dotted with granaries which are constructed by the members shortly before the harvest period or even when harvesting is going on. These granaries which are located close to living houses form an important component of Ungwai settlement features (See Fig. 3). In fact, grains can last up to 4 years inside granaries, provided the roofs, among other things, are well maintained (Daji 1991; Ogundele 1995). Apart from preparing the grains (guinea-corn and millet) into different kinds of food, they are also used for brewing local beer called burukutu. Burukutu is a popular drink among the Ungwai especially for such ceremonies as marriage and naming of newly born babies.

### **Chronological and Archaeological Perspectives**

At least two genealogical charts have been constructed based on the results of oral traditional survey conducted in certain Ungwai present-day settlements. Thus far, it seems likely that the Ungwai might have settled in the area not later than late 18<sup>th</sup> century AD. This appears to be the minimum time-depth of the occupation of the Kabitu hills (KGIS2). This was the time when they were living on local hill tops due to insecurity of lives and property resulting from slave trading/raiding activities; and the Fulani jihads with the attendant problem of demographic changes. Despite problems such as errors of omission and exaggeration which are often associated with oral traditions, some tentative dates have been obtained. These relative dates from genealogical data could also serve as a basis for further testing of the validity of oral traditions, when the charcoal samples collected from the excavated trenches are: processed in order to get absolute dates.

The plane-table mapping of the archaeological settlement located on the Kabitu hills, reveals different kinds of features and/or structures. Thus, for example, several small-sized circular structures were identified. These structures which range in diameter from 80 to 110 cm, might have served as goat houses or pens based on information gathered from the present-day Ungwai. Therefore, the availability of these small structures which are comparable to the ones found in the ethnographic context, appears to confirm the information from the local inhabitants that animal husbandry among the Ungwai was of considerable antiquity, stretching back to the time of hill-top occupation. Similarly, the probable goat houses on the hill top were smaller in diameter than those found in the ethnographic context (which range between 1.5 and 2 metres) This appears to be a mere adaptation to different topographical situations. For example, the goat houses on the Kabitu

settlement site were smaller in size (at least diameter-wise) than those in the plains, because of lack of sufficient habitable space for the ancient Ungwai (made up of several extended family groupings) who were living there.

Apart from local information which has it that cultivation of such crops as rice, sorghum, beans and yams was done, the availability of structures which resemble bases of granaries as well as debris of possible walls and deep grindstones is a good testimony or indicator of ancient farming practices among the Ungwai (with particular reference the cereal cultivation and consumption on hill tops and slopes) (SeePlate3).

However, the scope of this mode of life among other things will be better known as research progresses in the region.

## **Conclusion**

Investigations carried out to-date have shown certain facets to the subsistence strategies of the Ungwai people of the Middle Niger Valley area of Nigeria. These people have over the years been cultivating different kinds of crops such as yams, guinea-corn, millet and beans usually within a work-group context. In addition, animal husbandry was practiced with the wastes from animals being used to enrich the soils. Indeed, the work-group system has been found useful among the people, not only for its economic benefits, but also for the positive social implications. The high level of cooperativeness of this system makes it an indispensable tradition for enhancing the survival and progress of the Ungwai. This is a vibrant cultural heritage that must be protected and promoted at all cost for posterity.

Similarly, the Ungwai have developed some excellent preservation strategies both for yams and grains. Local information has revealed that guinea-corn, millet and beans can be successfully preserved for more than 3 years if the granaries are properly made and their roofs repaired when the need to do so arises. Research work to-date shows also that these agricultural modes - cultivation of cereals and yams as well as animal husbandry were practiced on the hill-tops and slopes by the ancient Ungwai. This inference is based on the archaeological remains of features at our disposal. The identification and closer examination of possible goat houses and granaries on the Kabitu hills appear to confirm the validity of ethnographic and oral traditional information concerning the antiquity of Ungwai agriculture. It is now very clear that oral tradition has a lot to offer with respect to cultural heritage scholarship in Nigeria as indeed much (if not all) of Africa. The work has also provided some great insights into social process among the Ungwai people indeed, this study has demonstrated the fact that agriculture is a facet of human culture and that

it cannot be properly analysed only within an economic frame of reference. This is because agriculture is incontrovertibly a network of social, political, ecological, economic and demographic phenomena.

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## Aspects socio-anthropologiques de la gestion durable des ressources naturelles: Formations végétales au Benin

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### Résumé

*Le millenium qui s'annonce a déjà posé les bases du développement, quoique varié et multidimensionnel, des pays au prise à leur écodéveloppement. Les pays en voie de développement, l'Afrique et le Benin en particulier, ne sont pas en marge de ce défi du Steele. Du développement économique au développement participatif ou de l'écodéveloppement au développement durable; ce sont la autant de niveaux plus aux mains franchis dans la quête du développement global, au regard de multiples essais de gouvernance et de choix économique et politique. L'intégration du Benin à l'ordre économique mondial n'est pas sans incidences sur les habitudes acquises de la recherche cumulée en matière de processus de développement au plan local et national. Prise de conscience et identification des problèmes par les populations, recherche d'actions concertées de développement local, transfert de compétences sur la gestion des ressources naturelles (. . .), sont des éléments à mettre à l'actif des expériences en matière de développement. Placée dans un contexte national, Processus de décentralisation de l'appareil administratif et ses corollaires, la gestion des ressources naturelles se heurte à la nouvelle donne de valorisation du patrimoine national considère jusque-là: comme une entité indivisible du patrimoine au niveau local paries populations. Les conflits de gestion autour des formations de ressources forestières et la dénaturalisation de forêts secrètes pour causes de réhabilitation posent un ensemble de problèmes imputables l'appréhension du développement qu'il convient de redéfinir. Ceci, afin de dégager d'une part, les causes de dégradation de la biodiversité au niveau des formations végétales (types de forêts) et d'autres parts, les implications socio Anthropologiques des interventions de développement en matière de conservation de l'environnement. Au-delà de taus soupçons, la solution pour un développement durable implique nécessairement la prise en compte des aspects économiques, sociaux, culturels, civils et politiques; ainsi que celle des aspects écologiques (Biodiversité de lécosystème) et religieux.*

## **Introduction**

Les problèmes posés par la gestion durable des ressources naturelles continuent de susciter des interrogations qui renvoient à la problématique du développement durable en Afrique d'une façon générale. Il est plutôt question de ce développement qui, depuis la seconde moitié du deuxième millénaire, a non seulement galvanisé les courants de pensée développementalistes, mais aussi, a "standardisé la marche de l'humanité en terme d'approches.

Toutefois, il faut reconnaître que le développement a été le problème vraiment posé à l'échelle mondiale, par lequel des solutions intéressantes à l'ensemble du globe sont recherchées dans le but d'harmoniser d'une part les conditions de vie des peuples défavorisés aux plans de la promotion de l'écologie, de la sauvegarde de la nature et les stratégies de développement communautaire au niveau local, et de répartir équitablement les fruits du progrès d'autre part.

En si peu de temps que d'événements cycliques, d'espérances, de déconvenues et d'échecs n'ont-ils pas marqué les espérances en matière de développement en Afrique.

Au Bénin, le constat est si évident qu'on s'aperçoit, sans grand mal aujourd'hui, que le développement souhaite et opère, loin de répondre exactement aux attentes des populations concernées, a engendré plutôt de nouveaux contextes d'expressions locales de légitimité de regard; donnant ainsi lieu & l'émergence de nouvelles formes de contrôle et de gestion de ces ressources. Ce recours à une légitimité aux couleurs locales doit tout son sens aux acquis du développement à la base et aux spéculations entretenues autour du processus de décentralisation.

La gestion durable des ressources naturelles autour des formations végétales au Bénin est un cas parmi d'autres, choisi pour porter un regard sur les causes de la dégradation de la biodiversité au niveau des types de forêts et pour aussi dégager à partir des types d'intervention de développement en matière de conservation de, l'environnement, les implications socio-Anthropologiques.

## **Considérations générales sur la diversité biologique au Bénin**

La dégradation croissante de l'environnement au Bénin, touchant de plus en plus la stabilité de la diversité biologique, préoccupe depuis un certain temps les milieux de décisions. Des mesures législatives, des conventions et des projets ont été initiés dans ce sens pour corriger l'impact de ce phénomène.

Cependant, force est de reconnaître que ce phénoménal a pris de l'ampleur grâce à notre mode de production, (cf. annexe, Tableau no 1: Données Socioéconomiques sur la république du Benin).

En effet, l'économie du Benin repose en grande partie sur l'activité agricole. Ce qui lui permet de garantir l'autosuffisance alimentaire et d'augmenter ses exportations de coton (plus de 90% des revenus), au point d'atteindre un taux de croissance agricole de 4% depuis le début des années 1980. Ceci, au prix d'une vaste exploitation des terres. Aussi, coexistent avec ce type de production de l'économe, d'autres activités humaine ou phénomènes naturels qui concourent à la dégradation de l'environnement. Les feux de brousse, la disparition progressive du couvert forestier pour cause de consommation d'énergie, le déclin de la fertilité des sols par suite de surexploitation et d'érosion, l'envasement des lagunes et l'amenuisement des ressources halieutiques. Au nombre des causes identifiées, on peut citer:

- la croissance démographique rapide et sa répartition inégale occasionnent une expansion incontrôlée des villes avec ses corollaires;
- l'insécurité foncière rendant précaires les conditions d'existence des éleveurs et agriculteurs dans certaines localités;
- les activités industrielles et la pollution.

Une estimation du coût de la dégradation de l'environnement, réalisée dans le cadre de l'élaboration du Plan d'action Environnementale (PAE) est évalué après de vingt milliards de francs CFA, y compris toute proposition de causes.

Ceci dénote de l'acuité du problème qui indubitablement a un impact négatif certain sur ce qu'on appellerait la diversité biologique. Celle-ci dépend de son milieu de vie qu'est l'écosystème. A cet effet, on distingue fondamentalement deux écosystèmes majeurs au Benin. Il s'agit des écosystèmes terrestres (faune et flore) et des écosystèmes aquatiques.

Une recherche approfondie sur la diversité biologique menée ressèment (MEHU, CBDD, 1998) par une équipe pluridisciplinaire de chercheurs nationaux, a montré qu'il existe au Benin des causes directes et indirectes de perte de la biodiversité qui se traduisent par certaines activités spécifiques de l'homme dont les niveaux d'impacts les plus importants actuellement intensifiés affectent la génétique, les espèces et l'écosystème. Les tableaux suivants pressentent la synthèse des causes de perte de cette diversité biologique.

**Tableau 2: Cause directes de perte de la biodiversité**

| Types d'écosystèmes      | Causes Directe                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                          | Magnitude Elevée                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Magnitude Elevée                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| ECOSYSTEME<br>TERRESTRES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dominance de monoculture dans les système d'explication actuelle (SE) (environ 60% des surfaces agricoles consacrées à la monoculture des vivriers de base, 15% au coton),</li> <li>• allumage fréquente des feux de brousse (GSE) (destruction de 75% de la superficie du foret classées de la Lama 1976 à 1992.</li> <li>• collection cumulative de bois annuellement couper pour le feu.</li> <li>• surpâturage des terres de pâturage (E) (densité du bataille par 1000km<sup>2</sup> de porte.</li> <li>• braconnage a but commercial entrainant menace de disparition de beaucoup d'espèces (léopards, damalisques, éléphants, cobes de bouffon, etc.)</li> <li>• utilisation de produits chimiques a large échelle (SE).</li> <li>• consommation annuelle engrais.</li> <li>• consommation annuelle de pesticides.</li> <li>• problèmes zoo sanitaire et phyto sanitaire (GSE)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• utilisation de semences améliorées (30%) des semences de mais chaque année(SE)</li> <li>• mauvais utilisation des pesticides.</li> <li>• perte de variétés de plantes sauvage due au nettoyage du sol et à la conversion, du sol en ce qui concerne son utilisation.</li> <li>• érosion du sol (E) environ 8% superficie agricole affectée chaque année par une érosion sol.</li> <li>• transhumance.</li> </ul> |

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
|             | · destruction de l'Habitat des<br>(SE).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |  |
| ECOSYSTEMES | · destruction de la mangrove(SE)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |  |
| AQUATIQUES  | données chiffrées.<br><br>· surexploitation des plans d'eau due<br>à<br>la poussée démographique<br><br>· utilisation des techniques de pêches<br>destructives (filet à mailles réduites<br>etc.) (SE)<br>· dégradation de la qualité d'eau<br>provenant de rejets du sol et de<br>l'infiltration des produits chimiques<br>due<br>à une agriculture intensive(SE)<br><br>· ouvrages d'arts mal conclus;<br>retenues<br>d'eau, ponts et barrages(E)<br><br>(sensiblement) égal à 70% des<br>ouvrages mal conclus). |  |

Légende: Niveaux d'impact

G - génétique

S - espèce

E - écosystème.

## Cadre et objectif de l'étude

Réalisée dans le département de l'Ouémé, l'étude a porté sur les sites de forêts appartenant aux écosystèmes du bas delta et de la vallée de l'Ouémé respectivement dans les Sous-préfectures de Dangbo (Village Bembe) et de Bonou. Ces sites, étant inclus dans les zones sujettes à de perte de ressources due à la dégradation de la biodiversité et de l'écosystème, méritent tout l'intérêt que nous leur attachons au plan des nouvelles stratégies locales de conservation, de contrôle et de gestion organisée autour de ceux-ci.

A cet effet, deux, catégories de formation végétale ont été ciblées (forêts sacrées et forêts classées ou naturelles). Une approche comparative des réalités sociologiques spécifiques chaque environnement de ces formations végétales permettra d’une part de faire comprendre la dualité des problèmes sous-jacents aux rapports conflictuels consécutifs aux interventions de développement local et, de montrer d’autre part la relative des intérêts antagonistes cachés, au regard donc de l’ambivalence de perceptions créées autour du processus de la décentralisation par les groupes d’acteurs. Ce qui conduirait finalement à ramener le débat sur les nouveaux enjeux du développement durable.

**Tableau 3: Causes Indirectes de Perte de biodiversité**

| TYPES       | CAUSES INDIRECTES                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ECOSYSTEMES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· inexistence d’un véritable régime de propriété foncière et d’une appropriée.</li> <li>· Aléas climatiques (sécheresse, crue, etc.)</li> <li>· Faible développement des filières autres que le coton.</li> <li>· insuffisance de connaissance des techniques des gestions des ressources zoo génétiques.</li> <li>· insuffisance de compétence dans le domaine de la biotechnologique.</li> <li>· manque d’équipement pour une exploitation judicieuse de ce potentiel.</li> <li>· me connaissance des différentes souches dans les domaines de la biotechnique alimentaire.</li> </ul> |
| ECOSYSTEMES | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· faible valorisation des ressources aquatiques.</li> <li>· absence de programme de gestion adéquate des ressources.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

Source: Rapport National sur la diversité biologique

### Implications Socio-Anthropologiques de la Gestion des forêts

#### Caractères Spécifiques des Forêts

**La forêt de Bonou:** c’est une forêt classée d’une superficie de 179 ha. Elle comprend une forêt naturelle marécageuse, un foret planté de samba (triplochiton Scleroxylon) périodiquement inondée et une forêt plantée de teck. Cette forêt jadis en bon état de conservation, du fait d’une population riveraine très respectueuse de la réglementation forestière, se trouve aujourd’hui dans un état de dégradation progressive du fait de l’exploitation clandestine opérée par certaines structures de l’état pour des fins commerciales. L’environnement socio-culturel du forêt de Bonou est caractérisé par une population à dominance de Wemenou (autochtones)

auxquels se mélange une faible proportion de Holli (allochtones), cultivateurs migrants sédentarisés et de Mahi venus de la région d'Agonlin. Le forêt classes de Bonou est aussi sous influence des nagots et Yoruba du plateau Saketepobe qui contrôlent l'essentiel des activités commerciales liées à la chasse.

**La forêt sacrée de Bonou (Gbevozoun):** C'est une forêt sacrée appartenant à la famille AGUINNIN qui fût originairement la première à s'installer. La divinité vénérée de cette famille est le vodoun Gbevo qui donna son appellation à la forêt sacrée dite Ubevozoun. Cette divinité & un chef religieux, le Gbevonon Akol, qui joue le rôle de gardien des valeurs socioculturelles du milieu.

**La Forêt sacrée de Bame (Bamezoun):** Elle est située dans le village de Bembe à côté de Hozin dans la Sous-préfecture de Dangbo. C'est une forêt dense, sacrée communautaire, périodiquement inondée par endroit. Son caractère sacré lui vient du fait, qu'elle abrite la tombe de l'ancêtre de tous les Wouemenou et les reliques de la dynastie, du fait aussi qu'on continue d'y enterrer les autochtones animistes et d'y procéder soit aux rituels d'intronisation des chefs Wouemnou, soit aux cérémonies de retrouvailles appelées Togo.

### **Stratégies Indigènes de Protection de l'Environnement**

Dans le bas Bénin à forte densité de population, la diversité a pu être sauvegardée grâce à une stratégie endogène de protection de l'environnement reposant sur les institutions et croyances locales du vodoun. Ainsi, pourrait-on constater que la diversité de comportements ou de réponses des différentes communautés face à un défi s'inspire des spécificités qui caractérisent chaque environnement socioculturel. Le vodoun est donc une réalité sociologique qui s'impose à travers la gestion du milieu. Le panthéon du vodoun au Bénin est caractérisé par une multitude de divinités.

Quant au culte vodoun, il s'appuie sur une variété des couvents autour desquels existe un réseau dense d'adeptes chargés de veiller au respect des interdictions et des règles sociales. Chaque couvent est une institution et de ce fait contribue selon ses compétences et ses attributions à la promotion de l'environnement. Les types d'activités qui préoccupent la protection de l'environnement concernent surtout la chasse et la coupe du bois de feu dans les forêts (sacrées ou non). Plusieurs formes de pressions sont utilisées, par les institutions du culte vodoun en cas d'atteinte aux normes établies. Imposition de tribus à verser par le coupable, menaces des adeptes pouvant aller à l'envoutement du coupable (...) Il s'agit des cultes de Zangbeto (gardiens de



nuît) et d'ORRO qui sont réputé pour cela. Ces stratégies endogènes de protection de l'environnement, qui représentent un atout important, doivent aujourd'hui s'accommoder à la dynamique du développement dont les comportements dans bien de cas sont sujets à des polémiques.

### **Dynamiques de développement et réalités sociologiques**

Le constat fait sur les menaces qui pèsent sur l'équilibre écologique, sur la perte de la diversité biologique et sur la dégradation de l'écosystème des formations végétales, obligé à porter un regard accusateur sur l'homme. Celui-ci, étant contraint à un impératif de survie dont les composantes embrassent toutes les dimensions de sa vie, de sa culture et de son environnement social et physique. Plusieurs stratégies d'interventions ont été mensés pour apporter des solutions aces problèmes. Le cas des forêts classées objet de projet initiés par l'Etat au prix de gros efforts financiers, retient l'attention du fait des situations conflictuelles qui en en découlent. Il importe d'abord de savoir sur quelles bases et par quelle logique ces projets sent inities. Un exemple type de conflit de gestion autour de formation végétale dans notre zone d'étude est celui de la forêt classée de Bonou qui répond assez bien aux objectifs de conservation.

La création de cette forêt remonte aux périodes de 1940 à 1945 par la première superficie boisée et de 1961 à 1962 pour la seconde. La fréquentation de cette forêt est règlementée par des mécanismes endogènes de contrôle qui n'étaient pas envisagées et prise en compte officiellement dans le plan de gestion de la dite forêt.

Ainsi chaque acteur se donne le privilège de droit de regard sur la gestion de la forêt, Pour avoir veillé à sa conservation, la population la considère comme un patrimoine du terroir. Ce qui n'est pas partagé des initiateurs pour qui le bénéfice de l'exploitation revient à qui de droit c'est à dire à la Direction des Forets et des Ressources Naturelles, chargée entre autres de la mise en œuvre de la Politique Forestière Nationale. Cette divergence de vues et d'intérêts serait à la base des conflits autour de la gestion de ce foret. L'autorisation d'exploitation accordée deux secrètes (Compagnie du Golf et Bibliothèque Moderne) par l'Office Nationale de Bois (ONAFI) en 1996 marquera le début de cette crise. Malgré les démonstrations de force par les structures concernées, la population n'a pas cédé. Ce rapport de force n'a trouvé d'issues qu'autour d'une table de négociations ou chaque groupe d'acteurs aurait trouvé son compte. La population consciente de sa participation à la protection et la conservation de son environnement, a réclamé et obtenu au titre de dommage et d'intérêt la somme de 4.650.000F CFA. Une partie de cette somme aurait servi à la construction de deux modules de classes pour le collège de Bonou, l'autre parti a permis d'alimenter

la caisse d'appui au "Comité de rénovation de la forêt", La création de ce comité est, en fait, une pure invention locale, une forme nouvelle de stratégie de gestion locale de la chose publique. L'idée de la cogestion des ressources naturelles dans ce milieu devient une réalité à partir de cette crise. Ce comportement au sein de la communauté est un indice révélateur d'une dynamique locale autour d'intérêts de développement du milieu. La prise en charge de la construction des modules de classes en est une illustration.

Cependant, il se dessine un enjeu majeur pour le développement qui relève du projet de la décentralisation en voie d'application au Bénin, par rapport auquel il incombe d'y réfléchir pour que le développement dans son processus dynamique ne rate son chemin et devienne une autre source de conflits entre les communautés locales. Car, la mise en œuvre du projet de décentralisation ne connaîtra pas une réussite semblable dans toutes les localités du simple fait qu'il continue de susciter des réticences et aussi du fait qu'il demeure différemment perçu de la population. Néanmoins, la prise en compte de ce paramètre devrait assurer une garantie pour chaque localité en quête de son auto-développement.

## **Conclusion**

La protection et/ou la conservation de l'environnement d'un milieu s'inscrit dans le cadre des initiatives de développement qui s'appuient généralement sur des projets. L'expérience de développement à travers la gestion des ressources naturelles des forêts, a introduit dans le champ de ce développement des dynamiques locales; expressions nouvelles d'un ensemble de divergences de visions et d'intérêts, qui concourent, pour la plupart des cas, à la formation de stratégies locales adaptées aux exigences de lutte pour la conquête de la gestion et du contrôle de ces ressources. Ainsi, à la gestion des ressources naturelles par la communauté se greffe celle du terroir qui requiert, par ailleurs, le sens d'une valeur positive pour l'avènement du processus de décentralisation. Cependant, il importe aussi de poser une équation au profit des projets de développement, notamment sur la conservation ou sur la réhabilitation des forêts: projets pour lesquels la prise en compte des aspects économiques sociaux, culturels, civils, politiques, écologiques et religieux, s'avère nécessaire.

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### Annexe 1: Abréviations Et Sigles Utilisés

MEHU: Ministère de l'Environnement, de l'Habitat et de l'Urbanisme.

CBDD: Centre Béninois du Développement Durable.

PAE: Plan d'Actions Environnementales.

ABE: Agence Béninois pour l'Environnement.

### Annexe 2:

**Tableau 1: Données socio-économiques sur la République du Benin**

|                                                | 1993  | 1994  | 1995    | 1996    |
|------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|
| 1. Données économiques et financières          |       |       |         |         |
| PIB Prix courant en milliards de FCFA          | 596.4 | 831.1 | 1.002.9 | 1.125.1 |
| Balance des naïvement 1                        |       |       | 25.3    | 24.8    |
| Balance commerciale                            |       |       | -104.2  | -63.5   |
| Balance des services                           |       |       | -39.6   | -51.3   |
| Transfert nets                                 |       |       | 105.0   | 94.1    |
| Importations                                   | 212.0 | 312.9 | 394.0   | 285.5   |
| Exportations                                   | 144.7 | 248.9 | 269.9   | 133.5   |
| Encours de la dette                            | 321.0 | 682.0 | 687.0   |         |
| Service effectif de la dette                   | 10.11 | 23.46 | 21.49   |         |
| Dépenses d'investissements publics (mirds) 2   | 46.8  | 83.7  | 93.8    | 849     |
| Dépenses publiques de fonctionnement (mirds) 3 | 64.7  | 88.4  | 126.0   | 134.5   |
| Revenu national                                | 3.2   | 4.3   | 4.8     | 5.0     |
| Taux de croissance                             | 2.1   | 35.0  | 16.6    | 6.8     |

|                                                    |       |       |         |         |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------|-------|---------|---------|
| Taux d'inflation (déflation du PIB)                | 596.4 | 831.1 | 1.002.9 | 1.125.1 |
| PIB on milliards de francs                         | 201.3 | 278   | 341.3   | 425.4   |
| PIB agricole (en milliards)                        | 395.1 | 553.1 | 661.6   | 699.6   |
| PIB non agricole (en milliards)                    | 116.9 | 159.8 | 185.7   | 200.9   |
| PIB par habitant (on milliards de F CFA)           | 93.7  | 146.5 | 171.3   | 203.1   |
| PIB agricole/hbt urbain                            | 1.96  | 1.99  | 1.94    | 1.64    |
| Rancourt PIB non agricole/hbt par PIB agricole/hbt |       |       |         |         |
| consommation des menaces                           |       |       |         |         |
| Consommation des menaces                           | 508.9 | 657.8 | 7912    |         |
| Indice de progression                              |       |       |         |         |
| Part consommation ménages en divers produits       |       |       |         |         |
| Produits agricoles                                 | 126.9 | 169.1 | 215.88  |         |
| Elevage - pêche                                    | 56.7  | 69.1  | 84.1    |         |
| Industries alimentaires                            | 127.7 | 161.0 | 192.5   |         |
| Textiles                                           | 39.6  | 37.8  | 41.6    |         |
| Produits mécaniques                                | 10.5  | 21.8  | 254     |         |
| Produits chimiques                                 | 18.8  | 29.5  | 35.8    |         |
| Autres produits industriels                        | 8.4   | 14.5  | 23.6    |         |
| Enraie                                             | 12.8  | 18.9  | 20.6    |         |
| Transport                                          | 32.9  | 44.5  | 50.8    |         |
| Autres services                                    | 17.3  | 20.0  | 23.3    |         |
| 2. Données sociales                                |       |       |         |         |
| Population et démographie                          |       |       |         |         |
| Population totale en millions)                     | 5.1   | 5.2   | 5.4     |         |
| Taux d'accroissement naturel (en %)                | 3.2   | 3.2   | 3.2     |         |
| Densité de population bts au km2                   | 44.2  | 45.7  | 47.3    |         |
| Rapport de masculinité hms/100 femmes)             | 94.8  | 94.7  | 94.7    |         |
| Proportion de la population urbaine (%)            | 40    | 36.5  | 36.9    |         |
| Taux brut de natalité (en pour mille)              | 46.7  | 46.7  | 46.7    | 46.7    |
| Taux brut de mortalité                             | 14.3  | 14.3  | 14.3    | 14.3    |
| Taux brut de technolâtre totale                    | 6.1   | 6.1   | 6.1     | 6.1     |
| Taux brut de production                            | 3     | 3.01  | 3.01    | 3.01    |
| Taux de mortalité infantile                        | 98.6  | 98.6  | 99      | 99      |
| Esperance de vie à la naissance (années)           | 54.6  | 55.1  | 55.5    | 55.9    |

1. Source: Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (B.C.EAO)

2. Données base Données base engagement non compris TIE, TEED, et PORTEFEUILLE

3. Dans le sens du TOF (Tableau des Operations Financières)

### Annexe 3: Note Sur Le Cadre Législatif

Plusieurs textes ont été adoptés pour assurer la conservation de la diversité biologique, l'utilisation durable des éléments constitutifs et le partage équitable des avantages découlant de l'exploitation des ressources génétiques. Il s'agit de:

- la loi no. 93-021 du 02 Décembre 1992 portant autorisation de ratification de la Convention sur la Diversité Biologique signée le 13 Juin 1992 à Rio de Janeiro,

- la loi n° 93-021 du 02 Décembre 1992 portant autorisation de ratification de la Convention des Nations Unies sur les Changements Climatiques signée le 13 Juin 1992 à Rio de Janeiro, la loi n° 93-009 du 02 Juillet 1993 portant régime des forêts en République du Bénin,

- la loi no 93-0011 du 03 Août 1993 portant condition de la chasse et du tourisme de vision en République du Bénin,

- la loi no 87/013 du 21 Septembre 1987 portant réglementation de la vaine pâture de la garde des animaux domestiques et de la transhumance;

- Ordonnance no 20/PRIMDR/SP du 15 Avril 1996, portant réglementation générale de la pêche dans les eaux continentales du Dahomey.

- le Décret no 93-305 du 13 Décembre 1993 portant ratification de la Convention sur la Diversité Biologique, signe le 13 Juin 1992 à Rio de Janeiro.

- le Décret no 094-64 du 21 Mars 1994 portant Classement du Parc National de la Pendjari en Réserve de la Biosphère;

- Décret no 183/PR/IR-RG du 25 Avril 1996, portant application de l'ordonnance relative à la réglementation de l'exercice de la pêche dans les eaux continentales du Dahomey

- l'Arrête no 781 MDR/DCAB/CC/CP du 30 Décembre 1992 portant création d'un Comité de Coordination pour le Projet Bénino-Allemand d'au la codiculture,

- l'Arrête no 783 MDR/DCAB/CC/CP du 30 Décembre 1992 portant création d'un Comité de Coordination pour le Projet de Protection des Végétaux

- l'Arrête no 1881/MDR/DC/CC/CP du 22 Avril 1993 relatif aux conditions de délivrance et d'emploi en agriculture des produits phytosanitaires contenant certaines substances dangereuses,

- l'Arrête no 375/MDR/IR/CC/CP du 15 Juin 1993 portant création de la Commission des Productions Animales et de la Recherche Agricole;

- l'Arrête no 601/MDR/IR/FRN/SA du 05 Août 1993 portant application en République du Bénin de la Convention sur le Commerce International des espèces de faune et de flore sauvages menacées d'extinction (CITES);

- l'Arrête no 144 MISATCDCIC-CABICOMT du 07 Octobre 1994 portant salubrité, aménagement d'espaces verts et implantation d'essences dans les abords immédiats des habitations, des institutions de l'Etat, des établissements industriels et commerciaux et des places publiques;

- l'Arrête no 29 MEN/DC/c-CAB du 29 Novembre 1994 portant attribution de la rénovation des jardins botaniques et zoologiques du Campus Universitaire d'Abomey-Calavi;

- l'Arrête inter ministérielle 128 MDRIMF/DC/CC/CP du 07 Mars 1995 Inter ministérielle relatif au contrôle phytosanitaire des végétaux et des produits végétaux, à l'importation et à l'exportation;

- l'Arrête no 226 MDR'DCICCC4>FRNISA du 20 Avril 1995 portant création du Comité de suivi et de mise en œuvre de la Politique Forestière du Bénin;

- l'Arrête no 78 MDRDC/CC/CP du 15 Juillet 1995 portant création de la Commission des plantes textiles et des plantes stimulantes du Comité National de la Recherche Agricole, l'Arrête no 592 MDR/DC/CC/CP du 26 Octobre 1995 relatif aux conditions générales d'emploi de certains fumigants en agriculture et dispositions particulières visant le bromure de méthyle et le phosphore d'hydrogène;

- l'Arrête no 694 MDRIDC/CCICP du 30 Décembre 1994 portant attribution, organisation et fonctionnement du Centre National de télédétection et de Surveillance du Couvert Forestier; l'Arrête no 023/MEHU/DC/SG/DE/SCQNSE/SA du 18 Septembre 1997 portant création, composition, attribution et fonctionnement du Comité National chargé de la mise en œuvre de la Convention Sur la Diversité Biologique et de son Secrétariat Permanent.



## Environmental Crisis in Nigeria: A Critical Assessment of State-Centric Approach to Forest Administration in South-Western Nigeria since 1960s

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### Abstract

*Nigeria faces a number of dangerous environmental problems that jeopardize the well-being of individual, population, and even the whole country. One such problem is the increasing shrinking of the country's forests. Various efforts by the Nigerian state to arrest the problem and its negative environmental implications have apparently proved abortive. As a matter of urgency and necessity, something has to be done to prevent the environmental crisis of the forest degradation in the country and to enable the renewable natural resources to generate benefits to meet human needs across generations. This study is therefore focused on a critical assessment of the state-centric approach to forest administration in South-Western Nigeria since the late 1960s. South-Western Nigeria consists of Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti states. The study argues that the environmental crises of poor forest administration in Nigeria stems essentially from the reluctance of the Nigerian state to involve in decision making and implementation other stakeholders like forest users, forest dwelling communities, informal local institutions, formal local governments, civil society organizations and actors. Using the approach of polycentric system of governance, the study suggests that forest administration is fundamentally a shared concern which should be the common responsibility of all interested parties. In this regard, the study is divided into the following sections: Introduction Approaches to forest Administration, Forest Administration in South-Western Nigeria since the late 1960s: the reality, The potential Contributions of other Stakeholders towards Sustainable Forest Administration in the 21st Century and Conclusion and Recommendations.*



## Introduction

*“without trees, there is no purified air, water, food shelter, there is no neighbourliness. Without neighbourliness, there is no society and no peace. Without society and peace, the WORLD is EMPTY” (Olofinboba, 1979:24)*

Environmental crises in the world today have become unimaginably aggravated and heart-rending. Various events such as waste disposal, uncontrolled and unregulated deforestation, ozone depletion, road construction, and excessive discharge of carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) have intensive and extensively constituted a mortal environmental threat to human survival. In fact, the crisis of increasing deforestation has raised more alarms.

About two million hectares of forests and scrub were ravaged in a conflagration on the Indonesian archipelago in 1997 (The Guardian, March 9, 1998.). In Africa alone, about 4.1 million hectares of tropical forests are lost each year. (Serageldin: 1993: 1; The Guardian, October 6, 1998). Taken together the danger of forestry extinction has continued to spawn more seemingly inevitable trepidations in view of the crucial benefits forests provide for day to day survival of the entire human population.

The renewable natural resources serve as excellent sources of domestic products and valuable ecosystem services. Goods and services provided by forest include fuel wood, clothing medicines food, hunting materials, religious and cultural uses, forage for livestock, and protection of local soil and water resources, (Serageldin, 1993; Lynch & Talbott, 1995; World Resources Institute, 1995).

## Suggested Approaches to Forest Administration

Sustainable forest administration definitely calls for harmony between exploitation and regeneration in order to continue to enjoy the benefits the renewable resources offer. While the identification of this objective is no longer a problem, the basic issue is the path (s) to its realization. It is the puzzle about how to realize the objective that appears to have provoked divergent views among various scholars. The suggested approaches range from state -centric approach, privatization to forest users-oriented perspective.

In the opinion of some scholars, forest administration should exclusively come under government or private control. While the profit maximization motive of the private sector organizations can lead to further forest degradation, the proponents of the state-centric approach argue that if the

responsibility is outside the state, forest are likely to be degraded and depleted because of over exploitation (Arnold, 1993: 158).

The above argument has been criticized on a number of grounds. First, the position maintained by the scholars does not accurately represent what obtained in empirical settings. Secondly, government officials, especially those of central authority, may lack a good grasp of the local peculiarities of the resource system.

In the alternative, many development scholars have suggested that forest administration should be left to forest users, especially local ones (Ostrom, 1990; Turok, 1996; Lynch & Talbott, 1995). As laudable as this approach is, its distinct flaw is the failure to consider other interested parties other than local forest users. the fact is that forests generate a variety of benefits that attract the attention of diverse interested groups, national and international.

It is against this background we find it imperative to adopt the polycentric governance approach in this paper. The framework recognized a variety of structures or decision-making centres in the public, private and voluntaristic/non-governmental organization (civil society) sectors at the local/national and international levels with independent policy analytical capacity and ability to influence policies such as forest policy. To make a strong case for this approach, it will be plausible to consider forest administration in Nigeria since the late 1960s.

### **Forest Administration in South-Western Nigeria since the Late 1960s: The Reality**

Before the 1960s when forest administration in South-Western Nigeria became the exclusive preserve of the state governments, the responsibility used to be part of the functions of local authorities created under the colonial administration. The sudden turn-round stemmed from some factors which marred effective forest administration under the local authorities headed by Obas (King). Chief among these problems are as follows:

1. The opportunistic behaviour of several local authority heads. The local authority helms-men turned forest reserve into their private assets; and
2. The unchecked shrinking in the quality and quantity of forest resources due essentially to unauthorized timber extraction. The attitude was encouraged through the connivance of local authorities, dishonest forest guards with timber contractors.

In order to stem the crisis. The then Western State Government decided to institute some probe panels whose terms of reference included investigations into illegal operations in the regions forest areas. Prominent

among the panels were the Mabogunje Committee on Forest Policy and Management of 1966-67 and some Somolu Commission of inquiry into assets of public officers in the Western State, 1965-69. At the end of their investigations, the probe panels separately raised accusation of conflict of interests against certain politicians and forestry officials who unduly enriched themselves either by plundering the forest reserves or diverting vast sums of public revenue accruing from commercial exploitation of forest into private accounts.

To abort the negative trend, the government of the old Western State took over all forest reserves within its geographical territory and began to have full responsibility for their administration from the late 1960s. To this end, a distinct department was created in the Ministry of Agriculture and National Resources for forest administration. This thus marked the beginning of forest administration by the state government in South-Western Nigeria (Oyediran, 1988:55). When the whole Western Nigeria was split into smaller units (between 1967 and 1996), each state government continues to maintain the Forestry Department in the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

In each state, the forestry department is headed by the Director of Forests who is directly responsible to the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The forestry personnel of the department consist of professional technical and uniformed staff. The professional class consists of university degree holders who oversee the day-to-day administration of forests. They handle such matters as granting permits to take protected trees. Tree seedlings and establishment of plantation are the chief duties of technical staff. Uniformed staff, alternatively known as rangers, enforces laws and regulations to see that logs and other forest products are removed legally.

Each state government administers its forests through the forestry staff. Other stockholders like local forest users and governments concerned are not given any place. Yet the efforts of the state governments in South-Western Nigeria are yet to remove the crisis of deforestation. But, sustainable forest administration requires collaborative interchanges among all interested parties. Other problems identified as roadblocks are as follows:

1. Low quality and quantity of trained staff;
2. Inadequate facilities to check environmental abuse of forests. Many parts of the forest areas in South-Western Nigeria are being used for unauthorized farming activities. Such activities have persisted due to lack of patrol vehicles and modern communication gadgets to check the unauthorized activities; and

3. Non-recognition of the efforts of local forest users at curbing illegal exploitation of forests.

These problems, combined together, have led to massive deforestation in the South-West of Nigeria. For example, forest destruction has been witnessed in Ondo, Ogun, Oyo, Osun Ekiti and Lagos States. In fact, the nation as a whole loses 350,000 hectares of forests each year. During the year between 1981 and 1985 alone, Nigeria experienced the annual rate of deforestation of 4% (Parka, 1995:2). The environmental evidence of the deteriorating conditions includes loss in biodiversity and genetic resources, loss of protection which plant cover gives to the soil, massive gully erosions increased temperature, and excess of carbon dioxide discharges which are capable of complicating environmental warming crisis.

In view of the negative environmental implications of deforestation, there is need to begin to see sustainable forest administration as a shared concern. Without equivocation, the state governments alone cannot continue to bear the burden of forest administration. Thus, there is the need for collaborative interaction among formal structures of government, civil society actors/organizations, bilateral and multilateral agencies and foreign governments.

Against this background, the various state governments in South-Western Nigeria have to see various interested organizations/actors as responsible partners in dealing with the crisis of Deforestation. The next section will examine the potential contributions of other stakeholders toward sustainable forest administration.

### **Potential Contributions of Stakeholders Sustainable Forest Administration in South -Western Nigeria in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Based on the benefits various people or groups of people stand to gain from forests, different sets of stakeholders in forest issues can be identified. From various empirical studies, the following have been identified as stakeholders whose interests should impact on the formulation and implementation of decisions on forest administration. These are local forest users (timber-contractors/fellers, hunters, taungya famers and their institutions), formal structures of government (federal, state and local governments as far as Nigeria are concern), private sector organizations, educational institutions, foreign governments and bilateral and multilateral agencies (Serageldin, 1993; Oyerinde, 1998). Without equivocation, any meaningful efforts against the environmental crisis of deforestation to protect

forest integrity for intergenerational benefits have to consider the diverse interests otherwise opportunistic and free riding behaviour by the neglected parties can hinder effective forest administration.

The adoption of the polycentric governance approach in this paper is mainly informed by the need to involve all these diverse interests. This is because many causes of deforestation stem from factors outside the forest sector itself. To state with, the role of local forest users will be first considered below.

### **Role of Local Forest Users**

These are people dwelling in and around forest areas as well as people permitted to extract forest products. One noticeable thing about them is that they are very close to the forest areas. Their daily interaction with the renewable can equip them with the knowledge of the local peculiarities of forest areas which government officials may not possess. Thus, local forest users serve as better and more reliable repository of the knowledge of the local peculiarities of forest areas which government officials may not possess thus, local forest users serve as better and more reliable repository of the knowledge of the local environmental conditions of their forests. Against this background, interchanges and collaborative interaction between them and other state holders can lead to the formulation of rules that suit the local conditions of the resource system.

If local forest users are made to have sufficient assurance that they will get long-term benefits for their efforts, they can develop more and greater interest in monitoring and sanctioning rule-infractions at the local level. However, the neglect of the local forest users can result in the failure of any effort to pass national legislation establishing a uniform set of rules for the entire state or country.

### **Role of Government**

In Nigeria, only the state governments have full responsibility for forest administration. While the federal government plays advisory role, the local governments concerned have been totally neglected. The fact is that collaborative interaction among the three tiers of government is required for effective forest administration. To this end, local governments in forest areas should be given a role to play. Such involvement becomes more imperative otherwise the objectives for which local governments in Nigeria were established will turn out to be a phantasm.

Such objectives are the desire to involve local citizens in the management of local affairs. The other objectives are the desire to meet the basic needs of local citizens as speedily and as efficiently as possible; and the desire to provide a mobilized. Forest therefore constitutes part of the local resources required to meet local citizens' needs of purified air, water, food and shelter, and neighbourliness. Also, as the closest tier of government, local governments are in a better position to know more about the local peculiarities of the forest areas within their geographical territories. At the time, the decisions of state and federal governments in Nigeria are crucial to any success in curbing and then arresting the rate of forest loss in Nigeria since the two levels of government set the socio-economic framework within which forest policy takes form:

### **Non-Governmental Organizations and Educational Institutions**

Based on the fact that everybody is affected by the scourge of deforestation, sustainable forest administration thus becomes a shared concern. This way educational institutions and non-governmental organizations as instruments for raising public awareness have some role to play. The role can take the form of organizing research, conferences. Seminars and lectures on forest conditions and the danger of deforestation. At each forum, participants can be sensitized about the menace of forest degradation against the ability of the renewable resources to generate benefit to meet the present needs without jeopardizing the use of resources to meet the demands of future generation.

Also, these institutions can play more meaningful role if they make the public know the dangerous impact of the crisis of forest destruction on the quantity of greenhouse gases like carbon-dioxide and on the ozone layers which serve as a protective umbrella for the earth against ultra-violent radiations. Interchanges between this organization and stakeholders can lead to the formation and implementation of sound and environment-friendly forest policy.

**Role of Foreign Government, Bilateral and Multilateral Agencies:** The basic fact is that the effects of deforestation are not only confined to the forest area where they occur, they can also led to inter-boundary crises of global dimension. To this end, government and bilateral and multi-lateral agencies cannot afford to stand aloof. While acknowledging that a number of the United Nations agencies and foreign governments have been showing concern about forests destruction, their interest should not be to impose decisions on the local institutions including governmental ones. Rather they can impact

more positively by making available human and financial resources to strengthen the institutional capacity of all the parties within the national boundaries.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

In the preceding, an attempt has been made to show that the crisis of deforestation can no longer be handled by the state government alone. Instead, all other interested parties should be given some place to contribute if only to save our world from being lifeless and to protect what remains of the ozone layers.

It is therefore suggested that interchanges among all the afore-mentioned parties and others that may only later pick interest in maintaining forest integrity will go a long way to keep the benefits offered by the forests. This way, it is hoped that human survival and healthy environment will be sustained in the 21st century and beyond. In the final analysis, we can be rest assured that the present world will be handed over to the in-coming generation in an environmentally secured way.

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## Sustainable Development and Environmental Health Problems in Africa: A Critique

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### Abstract

*Anthropological studies have revealed that Africa is the home of man and the cradle of civilization. It is very unfortunate that this continent is far behind others in development. Recently there has been a move towards socio-economic development in Africa and this has seriously affected the natural environment in such a way that human health is increasingly in jeopardy. There are threats emanating from the exploitation and misuse of the African environment and these trigger of conflicts which undermine security. While the emphasis now in Africa in particular and the world in general, are on sustainable development, it should be noted that the pursuit of economic growth and development to the neglect of the environmental considerations is likely to be unsustainable. This paper examines the environmental effects of the activities of some agents of development in Africa. It focuses on the extent to which the African environment has been polluted by multinational companies operating in parts of the continent. In this regard, particular reference is made to the oil (petroleum) industry. In fact, the activities of multinational companies have resulted in serious environmental pollution which constitutes a great risk to the health of residents of the communities where these companies are operating. The paper also examines the attitudes of the multinational companies to the environmental problems that emanate from their activities. It suggests a people-oriented African approach to the problem.*

### Introduction

Paleo-anthropological studies have revealed that man originated in Africa South of the Sahara. This took place in a particular environmental setting which environmental archaeologists have fully described in their reports. In fact, it has been observed that human biological and cultural evolution would not have been possible without the natural environment. According to

Sowunmi (1987), knowledge of the environmental setting of man is essential in order to obtain a fuller understanding of man and his cultural development through time, in close relationship between man and his environment.

The term environment has been defined by scholars from different perspectives. Webb (1991:33) defined environment as “the state of nature in which man finds himself; that is, the physical and organic world to which human beings have to adapt in order to survive”. He noted that the natural environment includes the earth, bodies of water, climatic conditions, vegetation, and the various species of animal life which move on the earth with human kind. Oyeshola (1995:3) defined the environment as “the unit from which resources needed for human sustenance and development are obtained and into which human development is directed”.

From these definitions, it is obvious that the natural environment is indispensable to man. In fact, man’s survival is made possible by the environment. Right from the time that human beings evolved in the African continent, they had been exploiting the natural environment to survive. This they did by means of culture. The cultural tradition used by man to exploit his environment is technology. (Webb, 1996).

Each society uses its technologies to extract life-sustaining food, water and medicines from this environment, and also to provide protection from the dangers of the environment.

It has been established that there is no *way* man can develop (economically, socially and culturally) without exploiting the environment one *way* or the other. This, no doubt, affects the environment in such a *way* that the human health is endangered. Indeed, the African continent has passed through different stages of development each of which involved the practical exploitation of the natural environment, the effects of which include air, sea and land pollution. Meanwhile, it has been observed that any development that neglects environmental health considerations is not sustainable, whereas the best type of development for mankind is sustainable development. There is always the need for man to maintain the environment from where he derives his sustenance. Indeed, an environment that is not maintained or preserved can mar the survival of the people living in it.

In recent times, the drive towards economic growth and development in Africa has resulted in environmental degradation which is inimical to health. Meanwhile, a person’s health determines, to a large extent, his/her ability to contribute to the accelerated growth and wellbeing of society. In fact, the potential manpower needs of any nation are dependent on the health of its citizens. According to Aregbeyen (1991), any nation that fails to care for its

environmental problems is more likely to be poor, sick, underdeveloped and much more likely to be without peace and stability.

In a broad perspective, environmental problems embrace accelerated climate Change with its causes and pollution and especially toxic wastes. Generally, population pressure on limited natural resources, rapid urbanization and international trade in toxic wastes highlights some instances of socio-economic difficulties associated with environmental problems in Africa.

Thus, in African countries, the polluted air from industry, transport systems and agricultural and domestic chemicals has already damaged many places to the point of causing respiratory problems for many. This must be checked, if man is to continue to live in the continent.

Africa has the greatest concentration of blacks in the world and it is blessed with human and mineral resources. Like many industrialized nations, African countries aspire to develop. Consequently, one could infer that many of the problems associated with industrialization would be found in Africa. In the context of environmental degradation mainly due to industrialization the problems of climate Change, ozone depletion, toxic waste, atmospheric and marine pollution, it should be noted that in Africa, the industrialization process is dominated by multinational companies.

This paper examines the negative impact of the industrialization process on the African environment. In this regard, it focuses mainly on the environment-related activities of multinational companies, especially those in the oil (Petroleum) industry. The paper also examines the attitudes of the multinational oil companies to the environmental problems that emanate from their operations. A people oriented African approach is suggested. The World System Theory is adopted as the conceptual framework.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this essay is the World System Theory. The proponents of modern world system theory claim that trade with the advanced nations through multinational companies has prevented the less developed nations from developing, and that unless those nations escape from countries of advanced capitalist societies they can never develop or modernize properly. The main thrust of this theory is that the wealth and poverty of nations are a result of the global process of exploitation. This theory is of the opinion that the poor, underdeveloped and impoverished countries have been subjected to the exploitation of the international capitalist system with its imperialist agents (Multinational companies) within and without.

Recently Cyril Obi (1998: 16) stated:

*“This is posed either as the way environmental conflicts in the Third World impinge on Western strategic or economic interests ...*

*This concern has had tendency to deny the link between unbridled capitalist exploitation and the degradation of the African ecosystem and the outbreak and reproduction of environmental conflict and resource wars in Africa”.*

The apostles of this theory include: Lenin, V.I., Paul Baron, A. G. Frank, Claude Ake, Daniel Offiong, Bade Onimode, Cyril Obi and others.

The oil producing companies in Africa (especially Nigeria) are multinational companies. Their activities cause environmental pollution which they worry less about. They are rather interested in the profits that accrue from oil exploitation and exploration. Such profits are sent to the advanced countries where the true owners of the companies are.

### **Environmental Pollution as a Hindrance to Sustainable Development**

The concept of “sustainable development” has gained widespread recognition following the publication in 1987 of the Brundtland Report entitled “Our Common Future”. It is the report of the United Nations sponsored World Commission on Environment and Development chaired by Mrs Gro Harlem Brundtland.

There is yet no universally accepted definition of sustainable development. Sustainable Development implies the handing down to successive generations not only of man-made wealth but also of natural wealth (like soil, water, plants and animals) in sufficient amounts to allow a continuing improvement in the quality of life (The Environment and the British Aid Programme, 1990).

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defines sustainable Development as ‘development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. (WCED, 1987).

According to Adeniji et al (1996:66), while there is still no universally accepted definition of sustainable development, ‘the concept implies a new evaluation of the relationship between people and nature, a movement away from the domination of nature to working with nature, and reassessment of the methods used for the transformation of natural resources into useful products’. This calls for a combination of effective action regarding environment and development taking into account the different relationships

between social, economic, technological and environmental conditions and requirements at national and international levels.

Two decades ago, Mabogunje (1968) noted that the current rapid growth and the attendant quantum of solid wastes and environmental pollution are serious constraints to sustainable development. It is obvious then that a people facing serious problems of environmental degradation are not sustainable in terms of development. Sustainable societies are societies where achievements in social, economic and physical development occur in synergy and are made to last.

In Africa, the need to banish poverty and raise living standards has made it imperative on successive government to pursue economic growth and development as a legitimate objective. This pursuit to the neglect of environmental considerations is likely to be unsustainable (Ayobade et al, 1996). Thus, the problem of environmental pollution, if not properly approached with a lasting solution, would hinder sustainable development in Africa.

## **Discussion**

While it is true that every human society aims to develop itself, there is no doubt that only a healthy people can develop. There is the belief that the development of African societies should evolve in accordance with the model found in Western societies. Any developing society whose development strategies do not conform with the Western model is to my mind, erroneous. It is the attempt to have a sudden development that conforms with Western systems that has brought about multifarious problems in African countries.

These problems include: political instability, economic mismanagement, environmental pollution and son.

Generally, no society can develop without exploiting the environment. Anthropologists often discuss the evaluation of culture in terms of technology. Through the ages, man exploited his environment in order to successfully develop. In doing this, he relied on technology. According to Maddar (1991) technology is the handmaid of culture; that which makes a particular level of culture possible at any material time. Human ancestors evolved from one stage of development to the other by improving the technology with which they exploited their environments.

In fact, as men increase the rate at which they exploit the environment for development, they endanger their health. Whereas development is useless to an unhealthy people. While development is necessary to every human society, the health of the people is of great importance.

In Nigeria, the essence of mining natural resources is to develop. But mining activities have created serious environmental problems. Presently, the nation derives a large percentage of her income from oil. Petroleum oil is being exploited in deterrent parts of the Niger Delta. The organizations responsible for the mining and processing of crude petroleum are owned by the Europeans and Americans whose major concern is profit maximization. These multinational oil companies are operating on a large scale in some parts of Africa (e.g. the Niger Delta area in Nigeria). Their activities are inimical to the interests of the communities around.

Mining and processing of petroleum resources in the Niger Delta area have a considerable impact on the land, water, air and biological resources. The impact is part of the price the oil producing communities pay for the benefit which accrues to the entire country. Water pollution through oil spilling affects drinking water, and aquatic life. That is, pollution of sea takes its toll on the food chain. This constitutes a serious problem to the communities. Secondly, land pollution affects plants which are an important means of livelihood to the people. Thirdly, air pollution is inimical to the health of residents of these communities. In most cases, it causes respiratory problems. Meanwhile, it is unrealistic to expect that mining of resources can be accomplished without affecting some aspects of the environment.

However, minimizing environmental problems caused by mining may be very difficult, considering that demand for minerals is continuing to grow while the volume of highly concentrated mineral deposits diminish. Nicholson (1990) has noted, "it is one thing to be conscious of the damage we are doing, it is quite another matter to come to understand how to repair the damage already done and how to limit further damage in the future" (1990: IX).

Oftentimes, residents at the oil-producing communities in Nigeria cried out to the government and the generality of the country for help out of the environmental problems caused by the multinational oil companies. For instance, the 23rd July 1998 issue of Tempo Newspaper described the manner in which the people of Ugbo Kingdom in Iiajeland (Ondo state) were being punished by Chevron (a multinational oil company) for crying out that their environment was being destroyed through oil exploitation. Thus, the Newspaper (Tempo) stated:

*"But why this unusual step? Chevron has become too arrogant, the communities alleged, Chief Abel Kalejaiye, spokesman for the group told this magazine that Chevron has been exploring and exploiting oil in this land since 1968. We have always been inviting them to see what could be done about the destruction of the whole area. Canals*

*are gone, organic organisms that support sea life have been destroyed and our communities mindlessly polluted” (Tempo July 23rd 1998:14).*

The multinational oil companies often neglect the cries of the people. All they do is to pretend that they are solving the problem when they are actually not. As mentioned earlier, the interests are focused on profit maximization.

Recently, there was the problem of oil spilling in some riverine communities in Akwa Ibom state, Nigeria. This was the consequence of oil exploitation by the Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited. These communities are, no doubt, rural and characterized by poverty. Realizing this problem, Mobil proposed a monetary compensation for the people affected. This approach (monetary compensation) is, to my mind, no solution to the problem. Anyway, the belief of the owners of the oil company (Mobil) is that since these people are poor all they need is money. Will money prevent further pollution of their environments and the attendant health problems?

While in the Western countries where the true owners of the multinational oil companies are, lasting solutions are constantly sought for environmental problems, in Nigeria, monetary compensations are given out, instead of seeking solutions to the problem. Poverty makes some people to accept money and seem to forget this persisting problem. The question therefore is: are these communities, being developed by this compensation and nonsolution approach? I think the answer is no. This is because the multinational companies destroy the environment and put the health of residents at risk, only to give them money even though their lives are being destroyed through pollution.

## **Conclusion**

In Africa, environmental degradation and depletion do pose threats to health and security at all levels. From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that there are threats emanating from the exploitation and misuse of the African environment, and that these threats, if not checked, can undermine human health, welfare and security. For example, the environmental pollution caused by the multinational oil companies in Nigeria has triggered conflicts. A case in point is the prolonged Ogoni-Shell conflict which led to the killing of Mr. Ken Saro Wiwa and the consequent suspension of Nigeria from the Common Wealth of Nations. In Nigeria, the oil-producing communities are always quarrelling with the Multinational oil companies because of their lack of concern for the environmental health of the people.



There is the need for the multinational oil companies to seek a lasting solution to the pollution problems they cause. A community-based African approach should be devised for solving the problem. The oil companies should, in collaboration with the government and proper consultation with the people, embark on a resettlement exercise. If the people are resettled with adequate infrastructure, they would be free from the pollution often caused by the oil companies. But they should not be resettled in a place which is not part of their land so that they can still lay claim to the oil-bearing land and sea where the oil companies are operating. They should note that while oil exploitation is necessary for development, it should not be assumed that lives should be destroyed (through environmental pollution) in the process. Many have died of ailments caused by environmental pollution in the oil-producing areas of the Niger Delta.

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## African Traditional Religion as the Socio-cultural Background of the African of the Third Millennium

Tatah H. Mbuy

### Abstract

*Africa and Africans have been the subject of great controversy and misunderstanding for centuries. Today, as we move into the Third Millennium, much of this controversy still persists. Although developments in communication have brought about more interaction between peoples, most of what is presented about Africa and Africans is heavily biased and often negative. This paper intends to do more than take just the opposite view. On the contrary, our conviction lends support to what Pope John Paul II said at Kinshasa in May 1980: "Africa constitutes a real treasure house of many authentic human values", In Social Anthropology, a "value" is that which people consider as important and worthwhile for them. Values are therefore, positive concepts and afford incentives to action. <sup>6</sup>They often constitute core issues in every culture. In Africa, culture and religion so overlap that there is no culture which is not religious and no religion which is not culture. Nonetheless, if any has to take precedence, for the sake of academic abstractions, then we can say that Religion is the "meaning" of culture in Africa; and Religion in Africa finds meaningful expression in and through African Traditional Religion (ATR). Unfortunately the concept and reality of ATR evokes negative responses from many people in the West. They identify ATR pejoratively with tribal practices of fetishism and magic<sup>7</sup>. And so what should act as the key to a better understanding of Africa and Africans, presents a stumbling block. This work intends to clear off this obstacle first, by pointing out that ATR has been and will continue to be the socio-cultural background of the African. Secondly, to bring an understanding to what ATR is all about and to insist that this religion deserves serious attention and study because the anthropology of Africa will be meaningless without it. Furthermore, if the African of the Third Millennium has to be understood and appreciated; if he has to come to terms with the new challenges, then we need to analyse the impact of ATR in his life. Life for the African is intensely and pervasively religious. The everyday drama of the African is acted out in the presence of the Divine. The African is, thus, naturally and instinctively religious. This work is divided into three parts. In the first part, we concentrate on the*

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<sup>6</sup> Beattie, 1964:73

<sup>7</sup> Magesa, 1997:19

*very concept of ATR which is often described variedly by different people. If there are still many misrepresentations of Africa and Africans, it is precisely because the leitmotif is not properly understood and appreciated. Some of what we use today as working definitions of ATR defines everything else except ATR. Perhaps only a few have actually come to grips with the main tenets of ATR. Part II of this work is an encounter with the Six Stones or teachings of ATR. These express the true African identity. Finally, some people have prophesied that ATR is bound to die out first, because of the tremendous advances in science and technology; and secondly because of the nature of the cultural-hybrid African of the new millennium. Our conviction, borne out by the experience of contemporary Africa and Africans, contradicts this prophecy. It is true that "contemporary Africa is in the middle of the transition from a traditional to a modern society". It is equally true that "this process of modernization entails changes not only in the physical environment but also in the mental outlook of our peoples manifested both in their explicit beliefs and in their customs and their ordinary daily habits and pursuits".<sup>8</sup> But ATR represents, for the African, a cultural intercourse with life itself and so permeates all spheres of life at all times. Change is normal, sometimes radical but seldom total.<sup>9</sup>*

## Introduction

The concept and reality of African Traditional Religion (ATR) evokes varied responses from different people. For some, it is identified pejoratively with tribal practices of fetishism and magic. Hence, ATR is not considered as a religion but as a worldview which is both superstitious and animistic. But for others, ATR identifies the African and his worldview.

Whatever scholars have to say, it is the conviction of this paper that African Traditional Religion has been and will continue to be the socio-cultural background of the African. Therefore, it deserves serious attention and study. In fact, as we enter the Third Millennium, the anthropology of Africa will be meaningless without a rigorous and scientific study of ATR. Furthermore, if the African of the new century has to be helped to face the challenges of the Third Millennium, then this study of ATR is urgent and imperative.

Our work is divided into three parts. The first part concentrates on the very concept of ATR which is often described variedly. If there are too many controversies over Africa today, it is precisely because the concept is poorly understood and the significance of ATR is not fully appreciated.

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<sup>8</sup> Wiredu, 1980:x

<sup>9</sup> Shorter, 1998:29

Part two of this work examines the main teachings of ATR. We arrive at the conclusion that ATR indeed expresses the true African identity.

Finally, in part three, we analyse ATR within the background accusation that the religion is bound to die out given the nature of the cultural-hybrid African of the Third Millennium. Our conviction here contradicts this allegation and is borne out by the experience of some contemporary Africans. ATR is a cultural intercourse with life itself and so permeates all spheres of African life.

## Concept of ATR

A concept is generally understood as an idea or notion; that which I have when I understand a word or any expression. Concepts are not language-bound. So different words in different languages can express exactly the same concept

For example, when the English man says “*God*”, he intends the same concept as the French “*Dieu*”, the latin “*Deus*”, the Lamnso’ “*Nyiny*” and the Igbo “*Chukwun*”. In the same way, one word or several words could mean different things to different people depending on their background and understanding. And so the concept of “*African Traditional Religion*” which should be clearly understood by those who use it, is still open to all kinds of prejudices and misunderstanding. We need to clarify the concept and arrive at some consensus. To do this effectively, it would be necessary to examine some of the prejudices and misunderstandings that have brought about the confusion over the concept and consequently the study of ATR.

### a) ATR: A Religion or a World View?

Frobenius quotes a 19<sup>th</sup>-century German newspaper in Berlin which carried the following remark about Africans:

*“Before the introduction of a genuine faith and higher standards of culture by the Arabs, the natives (Africans) had neither political organization, nor strictly speaking, any religion, nor any industrial development. None but the most primitive instincts determine the lives and conduct of the Negroes, who lack every kind of ethical inspiration.”*<sup>10</sup>

In the mind of this newspaper reporter, Africans have no indigenous religion!

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<sup>10</sup> Cf Frobenius as quoted in Olowola, 1993:10. Emphases are those of the author.

There are others who also thought and still think like him, even today. The early Portuguese missionaries to the Southern coast of Africa wrote back home: “*The people are all Hottentots and they have no religion*”!<sup>11</sup> According to Joao dos Santos, one of the most prominent priests of the era, Africans lacked even the ability to perceive errors in their traditional beliefs.<sup>11</sup> A German scholar and missionary, Emil Ludwig, coming after the Portuguese was also convinced that “*untutored*” Africans could not conceive God because “*Deity is a philosophical concept which savages are incapable of framing*”. Even a contemporary English anthropologist, like Elizabeth M. Chilver who worked for a good number of years in the Bamenda Grassland, writes that the Nso’ in mid-century, had no concept of an Almighty God!<sup>12</sup> Karl Grebe a Canadian linguist who did marvellous work in translating the Bible into Lamnso’ in the 1970s, boldly affirms that ATR is not so much a system of worship as it is a system of problem solving. In fact according to Grebe, man is at the centre of ATR rather than God. And this way of thinking is by no means, limited to expatriate writers. Curiously both Chilver and Grebe in the works cited above were assisted by Cameroonian “scholars”!

Many Africanists today would probably pardon this view and language only because of their meaninglessness and absurdity to more open-minded researchers. However, we note the depth to which prejudice or misunderstanding can influence the thoughts of people. More importantly, the aforementioned view translates an attitude which has so coloured much of what many people think and write about Africa that even some Africans no longer know what to believe and what not to believe about their cultural heritage. So others have decided, for want of a middle course, that what we call ATR is no more than just a “worldview”.

The concept of worldview is fairly recent but very popular in contemporary philosophy and anthropology. In fact, the terminology should probably be credited to George Foster (1965) who used several ethnographic cases to define *worldview* as “*a culture’s characteristic way of perceiving, interpreting and explaining the world*”. In this ideology, everything is perceived as finite: land, wealth, love, friendship, honour, respect, status, power, influence, safety, security and belonging. Hence Foster, speaks of worldview as “*the image of limited good*”. The talk of “*Weltanschauung*” (*worldview*) to mean a philosophy of life which practically guides people in their given situation. So, those who see ATR as a worldview, conceive it as a practical way of life which happens to

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<sup>11</sup> Cf Chilver, 1990, Thaumaturgy in contemporary Religion: The Case of Nso’ in Mid-Century. The support of Dr. Banadem, a Historian teacher from Nso’

<sup>12</sup> Grebe et al., 1997:40. Grebe is co-author with Rev Dr. Wilfred Fon a Baptist Pastor from Ndu, a neighbouring tribe to Nso’.

have the semblance of religious manifestation but which strictly speaking could not be considered as a “Religion”!

They are not to blame. Most of those who question the “Religiosity” of ATR either come from the West or have been educated with a western cultural background, where the presence of “*Religion*” is manifested in church buildings, priests and sacred scriptures. But in Africa, Religion is not understood in this way. So they are using categories that are native to them but alien to Africa. Cultural *kenosis* is a near impossibility. Therefore, it is not easy to see things from another person’s position. We can only experience reality as it presents itself to us or as we encounter it.

### **b) ATR: Paganism or polytheism?**

There are others who see various religious manifestations in Africa but they interpret them according to well-known schemes. So we hear the evolutionists talk of ATR in terms of “*paganism*”, “*animism*”, “*fetishism*”, and “*totemism*” or any other of the “isms” that are known. In fact, the general tendency seems to be to try to force African religious concepts into established moulds and to describe them in those terms.<sup>13</sup> But African Religious concepts need not fit into the well-known Western schemes. Rather African religious concepts are ‘like’ and ‘unlike’ Western concepts. There are obvious difficulties involved in the translation and interpretation of any phenomenon that we come across. We all approach reality with the categories that we have grown up with and are used to. Hence, most of our interpretations are not actually objective but at best, we can talk of a “*subjective objectivity*”.<sup>14</sup>

So when ATR is described as “*paganism*”, “*fetishism*”, “*animism*”, “*juju and ngambe*” we need to understand these descriptions within a historical religious background. Most of these words have either come from the first missionaries to Africa or they have been propagated by them. A good number of them sincerely did not understand the culture in which they found themselves. They therefore described phenomena according to their own cultural background. This is perhaps, understandable and tolerable. But when these very words are still used today by some African priests and scholars, then language students can only be polite to indicate that the usage is unanalytical, not to say unscientific. A brief etymological examination will confirm our allegation.

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<sup>13</sup>Cf Uzukwu, supra: 62

<sup>14</sup>The Danish philosopher. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) toyed with the concepts of the subject and the object for much of his life. He ended up, believing that the “existing individual” can only see reality from his dynamic self-commitment and free choice.



The word “pagan” comes from the Latin noun *‘paganus’* which means an “unbeliever”. An “unbeliever” is someone without any specific religious faith. To describe an adherent of ATR as “pagan” would scandalize any responsible researcher of whatever field who has ever worked in Africa. The major premise is wrong and consequently every inference drawn would be erroneous not only on grounds of logic but because this statement is not borne out by facts. ATR *is not* “paganism”

“*Animism*” is another word often used to describe ATR. The word comes from another Latin noun, *anima* which could be translated as *soul breath, or spirit*. This word was probably coined by the British anthropologist, E. B. Tylor who was convinced that the basic element in religion was the “*belief in spirits*” or some spiritual force. Tylor thought that for the so-called “*primitive peoples*”, “*anima*” was capable of leaving the body and entering other men, animals or things. Accordingly, such people would believe that every object had *anima* or its own soul.<sup>15</sup> It was probably this Tylor’s influence that lent credence to those who described ATR as “*animism*” because they saw Africans offering sacrifices on stones, near waterfalls, besides mountains and by strangely shaped trees. African scholars who are close to reality will have a different explanation for what others describe as “*animism*”. The African conceives God in terms of the *Transcendent in the Familiar*, the *Mysterious in the Banal*. The Supreme Being evokes awe and reverential fear. Hence, strangely shaped stones, extraordinarily quiet streams, waterfalls and mountains call to mind the sense of the sacred. The aura around them is associated with the kind that the Divine presence evokes. So the people decide to make the place their shrine and place of worship. It is therefore the *aura* and not the *thing* or *place* that is sacred. The use of the word ‘animism’ is consequently not an appropriate description of ATR. As for the term *‘fetishism’*, it was introduced by the Portuguese, the first traders on the African coast. They saw some Africans wearing charms and amulets and they referred to them in Portuguese as “*fetico*” which means “work of human hands” or “*like idols*”. The French and the English later used the word, within similar confines, spelling it as “*tetictie*” and “*fetish*”, respectively. So, there was no intention either for the Portuguese, the French or English to use this word as an “umbrella term” or even as a euphemism for ATR. It was, in fact, the English lady, Mary Kingsley, who first used the word in a manner that could suggest something else. But this was for her own purpose within a very definite context, and she had to explain in order to be understood even by her compatriots: “*When I say fetish or juju, I mean the religion of the natives of Africa*”. What was this juju?

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<sup>15</sup>Cf Tylor in Kottack, 1991:337.

“*Juju and Ngambe*” are a combination of two words from two different backgrounds and with two different meanings. “*Juju*” is derived from the French “*joujou*” which means “*little doll*” and was applied more to traditional African masquerades. “*Ngambe*” is a Cameroonian terminology from the Tikar word “*ngam*” which refers to the tarantula or scorpion. This spider has for long been considered as an oracle and is consulted for almost every problem, witchcraft included. *Ngambe* thus, referred to the art of consulting this spider. Gradually it became a generic term for all consultations done by sorcerers, soothsayers and witchdoctors. The early missionaries knew what “*Juju*” meant and what “*Ngambe*” involved. They did not want their Christians to get involved in both dancing jujus and consulting sorcerers. Hence, they preached against “*Juju and Ngambe palaver*”. ATR cannot be limited to masquerade dancing and consultation of “*ngam*”!

What about “*Polytheism*”, “*pantheism*” and “*totemism*”? These words in themselves do not describe ATR, especially as they are often used with negative connotations. We do not define a Religion by negating another or using parameters that fit another. What is at stake here is the limitation of the words and language used. There may be elements of polytheism, pantheism or totemism in ATR but none of these can, on their own, be a real description of the traditional religion in Africa.

### **c) ATR: Singular or Plural?**

Should ATR be considered in the singular or in the plural? The polemics has divided theologians into three camps. There are those who think that ATR should be referred to in the singular; others who are convinced it should be in the plural and still others who sit on the fence and will take no side in the debate.

Parrinder, considered as the “doyen” of studies in ATR, has always spoken of *African Traditional Religion* in the singular. Idowu’s classic in 1973 was on *African Traditional Religion*, in the singular. Mbiti’s work in 1969 on *African Religions* (in plural) and *Philosophy* was not restricted to ATR and could therefore be justified because in 1975 he wrote *An introduction to African Traditional Religion* in the singular. Cornelius Olowola (1993) prefers *African Traditional Religion* in the singular, just like Laurenti Magesa, who probably has one of the latest works on *African Religion* (1997). Official Church documents after the papal publication of “*Ecclesia in Africa*”(1995) speak of ATR in the singular. However, others like Oliver Onwubiko think “*it is safer at the present to talk of African religions* (in the plural) *because it is difficult to speak yet of a systematized and generally accepted form of belief and worship found throughout Africa*” P’Bitek (1970) thinks in like manner and so he writes about *African Religions in Western*

*Scholarship*. Benjamin C. Ray (1976) published his work on *African Religions: Symbol Ritual and Community*. There are many others who believe that ATR should be in the plural.

Between the two poles, there are those who either prefer to be neutral or who believe that whether we talk of ATR in the singular or plural makes no difference. Gehman is one of such. According to him, “*either singular or plural is acceptable, if one understands the issue*.”

*Just as there is not one ethnic group in Africa, but 1000, so there is no one formulation of religious beliefs and practices but many. The deeper you go into the study of religious beliefs in ATR, the more conscious you are of their diversity. Yet, in all these diversities, there is also unity. All African peoples are united on certain issues... The individual expressions may be different but a general similarity prevails throughout the continent, so we can speak of African Traditional Religion in the singular*”. Ebale is of the same opinion and he uses the terms African Religions and African Religion interchangeably because all aspects of African life have a religious dimension.

All three sides probably have serious reasons to hold to their respective positions. Yet all of us need to agree that although Africa has numerous tribes and each differs in many ways from the other, to evoke this as a difficulty towards unity, is rather unfortunate. Some people are in the habit of piling up ethnographic detail to produce an impression of chaos where there is in fact only variations on a few themes. There are other areas and elements of Africa that we refer to in the singular as if there were no internal diversities: *African Continent, African Art, African dressing, African music* and so on. Although we cannot legitimately deduce from these expressions that the “African Worldview” is homogeneous, they are a pointer to the fact that there is a lot of shared similarity in African values. In an era of multiculturalism, there is more to be gained, if we concentrate on building bridges between cultures than doing otherwise.

#### **d) ATR as an “African”, “Traditional”, “Religion”**

*i) ATR as an “African” Religion*: By this, we mean that ATR is African and it belongs essentially to Africa. It has authenticity in Africa, and the continent has the singular competence to interpret ATR as it is, to the world. ATR is culture in Africa and therefore belongs of necessity to the life of the people. Hence, it cannot be dismissed with a wave of the hand because it represents a people’s identity and unique way of responding to Divine reality and environment.

ii) ATR is “Traditional”: Lawson rightly puts it that, “*we owe to our ancestors the language which we speak; our religious ideas, and our artistic and scientific heritage*”<sup>16</sup>. So when we say that ATR is an African “Traditional” Religion, we mean that this religion has a long history in the continent. It resulted from the sustaining faith held by the forebears of present Africans. It is being practiced today by the majority of Africans in various forms and various shades of intensity, nakedly in most cases, but also, in some cases, under the veneers supplied by Westernism and Arabism. It is also a religion which is receiving a new vitality in certain areas consequent on nationalism and inspiration by other religions. Hence, ATR is a “traditional” religion which has not just been arbitrarily sprung upon various tribes in Africa nor is it some ephemeral phenomenon. This religion has seen centuries of existence and has animated the African soul for as long as humanity has been in the continent. It is seen as a gift from God through the ancestors who are the spiritual custodians and judges.

iii) ATR as a “Religion”: Religion is that dimension of human life which deals with ultimate questions; an openness to the mystery of life. In fact genuine religion is intercourse with the mystery of our beginning, our depths and our term. The following seven elements are essential to any religion:

1. Religion begins with the human recognition that we are neither the cause nor explanation of our own existence. Part of our human authenticity is having to deal with the very mystery of existence. This mysteriousness is the heart of the religious matter;
2. Once awakened to the omnipresence of this mystery in life, the human being is challenged and acknowledges the reality of an uncaused Cause outside himself;
3. This Cause is often acknowledged as personal or seen as a force or remains a “doubtful” mystery for some people;
4. The human being believes that this person or force is sacred and divine;
5. Then he submits to this Sacred Person or Force;
6. Submission is an acknowledgement of limitation and a profession of dependence which seeks some external and visible manner of expression;
7. Religion hardly ends up just a “personal” affair of the individual. Often it takes on a social dimension. And so gradually a recognizable and permanent pattern of worship grows: prayers, rites, rituals, sacrifices, offerings, etc.

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<sup>16</sup>Lawson in Encyclopedia of Religion, vol. 11: 677

From these seven essential elements, “Religion” has been described as both recognition of the divine presence and the practical manifestation of this recognition in prayer, rites, rituals and sacrifices. If we accept this description as a working definition, then *ATR is to be understood as the African manifestation of the recognition of the presence of the divine in their environment and life*. It has its own recognizable beliefs, rites and prayers, even if they are neither uniform everywhere in the continent nor systematically written down in a book of scriptures. So ATR is a Religion of its own right and today it is lived in its multifarious forms both within and outside Africa.

### **Six Stones (Teachings) of ATR**

Stones are very important in African mythology; strangely shaped stones are believed to be the dwelling places of some of the gods. Stones are used to make a fireside, the centre of family life and when stones are found in the palace courtyard, they are most symbolic as seats for the notable. Each notable knows who can sit on what stone. The stone is also used as the altar during traditional sacrifices.

Hence, we choose to talk about the “*Six Stones*” of ATR instead of beliefs because stones are more concrete and symbolic. Olowola quotes the reputed Nigerian scholar, J.O. Awolalu<sup>17</sup> as saying that there are six fundamental beliefs in Yoruba traditional religion. These beliefs are:

i) that this world was brought into being by the Source of all beings as the Supreme Being;

ii) that the Supreme Being brought into being a number of divinities and spirits to act as His functionaries in the orderly maintenance of the world;

iii) that death does not write “the end” to human life but opens the gate to the hereafter hence, prominence is given to belief in the continuation of life after death;

iv) that divinities and spirits together with the ancestral spirits are in the supersensible world but are interested in what goes on in the world of man;

v) that there are mysterious powers or forces in the world and that their presence makes man live in fear;

vi) that if men and women are to enjoy peace, they would live according to the laid down directives of the Supreme Being and His agents.

There is much that is loaded in these six fundamental beliefs. Much of what is found in Yoruba land is common to most of Africa. In fact, with a little alteration, they could easily be seen as the six main beliefs and teachings

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<sup>17</sup> cf Olowola\_1993: 9

of ATR. However, we prefer, for reasons already mentioned, to keep to our preference for six stones. These six *stones* consist of: *Belief in Supreme Divine Moulder*; *Belief in other Deities and Principalities*; *Belief in the Ancestors and the Living Dead*; *Belief in Respect for and Celebration of life*; *Belief in Solidarity and Community life*; *Belief in Culture as standard*.

i) ***Belief in a Supreme Divine Moulder***: In Africa, the people are so used to the idea of moulding from day to day that this concept is more easily applied to God than the concept of Creation. So it is more common to hear the people talk about the Supreme Divine Moulder who sustains all reality and whose existence is so self-evident that the people would think it bizarre for anyone to speak a contrary language. There are local names which predate the arrival of missionaries, which indicate that God exists and is supreme. So the Igbos of Nigeria gives the name “*Chukwubisi*” like the Nso’ people of Cameroon give “*Mbiydzenyuy*” to mean the same thing: “God is first”! In Kom we have the name “*Ankiambom*” which is the same as the Nso’ “*Kinyuy*” or the Igbo “*Chimaonye*”. They all mean “God knows”! “*Okechukwu*” “*Afu’mbom*” and “*Fomonyuy*” from the three tribes mean “God’s gift”. There are many of such names. In fact, most names in Africa that refer to God are theophoric. They not only affirm the existence but they also give an attribute of God. He is benevolent, almighty, omniscient and transcendent.

ii) ***Belief in other Deities and Principalities***: African people believe that the world is very densely populated by good and bad spirits. The good spirits are associates of the *God of our Ancestors* and often stand for his activities and his manifestations. In Yoruba land, we have the largest number of these deities, hierarchically organized. The people believe that there are about one thousand seven hundred “*orisa*” or divinities with *Orisanla* as the highest earth deputy of the God of or Ancestors. For want of a better word, the people refer to these divinities as “gods” but everyone knows that they are of a lesser degree. Thus in Nso’, the people speak about “the god of the palm bush”(*nyuy wo ru*), “the god of the river”(*nyuy wo ndzev*), “the god of the road junction”(*nyuy wo mintanin*) and so on. These gods are generally friendly with people. They easily link the living to the Supreme *God*, each in getting favours in the area of his jurisdiction. The “god of the palm bush” will only act favourably towards wine tappers. He cannot ensure the fertility of the soil because there is an “earth god”(*nyuy nsqy*) who takes care of that. For the sake of this work we shall refer to these “good god?” as divinities.

iii) ***Belief in the Ancestors and the “Living Dead”***: This concept is probably the most crucial in understanding the actions and reactions of most Africans. It was Mbiti who coined the term “living dead” with regards to the



dead in Africa and their relationship with the living. Although the “dead” are physically absent, they have achieved a new spiritual dimension and greater influence over the life of those who are still physically alive. One could get the false impression that according to Mbiti, all those who have died constitute the category of African ancestors. But not every “*living dead*” qualifies to become an ancestor. The *living dead* could be considered here as the generic term for all who are dead. In Nso’ they are called “*ankfe*” (the dead). But Ancestors (in Nso’ “*Anyu*” or divinities) specifically refer to good titleholders who have died and ***are near the Great One and have great power after death over earthly problems.***

They have control over a lot of earthly elements and at the same time they are now able to fight the evil spirit which sends evil spells on the living. So to qualify to become an ancestor, one must first have been a title-holder either in a family, tribe or clan. Furthermore, it is not sufficient just being a title-holder. It is important to have carried out the duty well and to have been seen to be good. The Ancestors play such a central and vital role in the life of the people that it would be inconceivable in a traditional setting to begin any major celebration without a sacrifice to them. They are also believed to come in the form of snakes, scorpions, lions and other creatures. Hence, in most tribes there are totems, i.e. animals that are treated with respect and never killed.

iv) ***Belief in Respect for and Celebration of Life:*** Magesa has written a whole book which concentrates on “the mystique of life” for the African. The promotion of life seems to be the criterion for morality in Africa.<sup>18</sup> The African does not see the world as a place for “contemplation” but an arena for activity. Life for him is a pragmatic reality, a gift from God. So the African seeks long life, health and prosperity. His prayers are for good life. Hence, all life is respected and celebrated in all its phases. Whether it be a birth, death, an initiation or whatever, the people find occasion for celebration, dancing, eating and sharing with each other. The soil which generates all life is considered as sacred. Hence, *Fans* in the Bamenda Grasslands of Cameroon are anointed with soil, and when anyone is cruel in secret, it is believed that the soil will avenge him and cause him to suffer an incurable illness, ill-luck or even death.

Life is of various categories; the earth is considered as “*mother*”; plant life sustains animal life which itself sustains the life of higher animals, spirits and the human being. Human life is considered as the highest created life. Hence, the traditional awe and sacredness associated with it. No one is allowed to take away human life at whatever stage or level of existence. Children are a blessing and the more fertile a woman is, the more of a blessing she is thought to be.

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<sup>18</sup> Magesa. op. Cit. passim

Childless women are believed to be a curse and are even considered witches. They are generally disliked by other family members.

Infertility is always blamed on the woman. In fact nobody and nothing is worthwhile which does not enhance the life of the human being.

v) ***Belief in Solidarity and Community Life:*** In Africa, an individual who acts as if he is absolutely self-sufficient does not exist. To survive as a person, one must identify with his family, tribe, clan or group. In fact, the belief is “a man is a man because of others”. Therefore, to survive as a person, a man must realize his being with and for others. The operating logic in African society is: “I am because they are; and because they are, I am”. The individual is seen in his “relatedness” to physical environment, others and the unseen world of constructive forces and beings. This is what makes the totality of the human being. When any of the relationships is impaired, the human being is “sick”. That is why healing in Africa is not just a biomedical concern; it has to do with preservation or restoration of human vitality in the context of the community and his relationship as a whole. The sense of belonging, Solidarity and community life is so strong in our traditional society that people do not care so much about what you have as how many people you are able to rally. This, for the African, is real wealth. People who bring about social disorder and destroy harmony are considered to be witches and wizards. They are said to be “nobodies”: no matter how much they own or how wealthy they are. The sense of community is so strong that when one enters the house of an elder, the question is never: “who are you?” or “what is your name?” but “whose child are you?”, a way of seeking to know your family tree and relations. Some traditional names are very significant and easily situate one within a family and clan. For example, there is only one family in the whole of Nso’ that has the name “Mbuy”. Most people who know the history of Nso’ well will immediately make connections when they hear this name. The same is true of anyone called “Mbinglo” or “Mofor”.

vi) ***Belief in Culture as the Moral Standard:*** Moralists often distinguish three stages in the development of morality: the level of instinct, the level of custom and the **level of conscience**. At the level of custom or culture of the group to which he belongs, what is good is “**that which is done**” and has come from the ancestors; what is bad is “**that which is not done**” and punishable by the Ancestors. This is because the people believe that custom has been handed down to them by their Ancestors, who as we saw are believed to be the mediators between God and the living. So whatever they command is to be obeyed unquestioningly. It is the standard of morality and the ancestors would sanction anyone who violates tradition. So the people will not readily go against their cultural values and thoughts, not even if the command comes



from a '*Whiteman of God*'. There are certain things that are just taken for granted. These do not change, at least not overnight, much less just to please anyone.

### **ATR as the Sociocultural Background of the African of the Third Millennium**

Some people have prophesied that the impact of ATR will either lessen or disappear in the face of technological development of the new millennium. This paper disagrees with that prophesy on the basis that ATR remains a culture in Africa and therefore forms the socio-cultural background of the African. Contemporary Africa is essentially a land of domination and exploitation, quartered, torn apart, divided, atomized, trampled underfoot. The African of the Third Millennium is arising from slumber and is more conscious of this damage done to the continent. Hence, he is looking for ways to counteract and recover his lost identity. This rediscovery and the resurrection of the African *ego* will make the African more attached to his roots than ever before. Therefore, to understand and appreciate the new African as he moves into a new millennium, we must look at the impact of ATR on his life.

The West has made great progress in the field of science and technology. Sometimes, those who do not understand what is at the background, blame Africa and Africans for being lazy in this respect. The continent is still very backward in technology and some people wonder why. Part of the reason lies in the fact that the fundamental African worldview is spiritual and person-centred. That is why, whereas the West continues to pride herself with scientific breakthroughs, Africa continues to call her to work for a more humanized world. Afro-centricity has great interest in the human person, whereas the West is said to favour materialism and the East spiritualism, Africa combines the material and the spiritual in the person. Thus human transcendence is an important dimension of African philosophy. What really matters in the African world view is the human person and his relationship with the supernatural and with other creatures. So whereas progress for the West is how to make things faster, smoother, larger and so on, progress in the Afrocentric manner is related to the development of human personality.<sup>19</sup> That is why the new breed of Africans live in suspicion of the West for the human catastrophes and genocide that they have orchestrated in this continent. All development assistance and whatever money the West may give Africa will

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<sup>19</sup>Ehusani, 1991:7; also Asante 1987:81

never compensate for the crimes of slavery, colonialism and the wars that have ravaged the continent and taken many human lives.

A good number of African leaders who have tried to imitate the materialism of the West have done untold damage to the African. The brutality that they engender is nauseating and whatever political gains they hope to have achieved are contradicted by the loss of confidence and support of the very people they claim to protect. The African believes in coexistence and strengthening of vital force in the human community and the world at large. Rulers are only successful if they can enhance this, link the people with their ancestors and bring all to their final goal.

The West will slowly come to realize that life confronts us with aspects of reality and with problems and dilemmas that cannot be handled in terms of adaptive and empirical knowledge. Materialism does not answer all our yearnings. The propensity for the occult in the West today is a sign that humanity needs to stretch out to the “beyond” and encounter the supernatural. It is in the wake of this consciousness that Africa will find new vindication in the value patterns of the future.

So when the West is dealing with Africa, she has to continuously realize that only whatever will advance the true development of the human person will have meaning to Africa and Africans. No amount of money, weapons, equipment and medicine will replace the sacredness that human life evokes. The West will continue to under develop Africa as long as she does not consider African solidarity as a far superior value. It does not pay to divide Africa in order to continue to rule and manipulate her.

Even in the area of evangelization, preachers and leaders of other religions in Africa will fail unless they realize that ATR is the socio-cultural background of the African they are addressing. Christianity and Islam will only succeed in getting double allegiance from Africans when these two religions first see themselves as “guest religions” in a continent where ATR is the host. The number of Africans who flock to the Churches and mosques may deceive anyone who is happy with mere numerical advantage. Deep within, the worldview of these Africans is profoundly inspired by ATR. Majority of Africans only “come out” of ATR when embracing another religion, but they do not “take off their traditional religiosity. Hence, in deep moments of crisis they seek recourse in their traditional religion and consult “Ngambe”.

In the field of education, the African of the Third Millennium seeks Education in Values, education in critical consciousness, not merely achieving certificates and knowledge that will have no practical impact in their lives. Quality education has therefore become the desire of most parents in Africa. All cry out for an education that will take local realities and needs into

consideration. Education is for life and should help the educated to become more human!

## **Conclusion**

In this paper we have tried to indicate that the African of the Third Millennium is profoundly influenced by ATR. It is therefore imperative to take the study of ATR seriously in order to appreciate the reactions of the Africans with whom the rest of the world is called to enter into dialogue. ATR is the socio-cultural background of the African and, this accounts for most of his responses in all spheres of his life.

## **Pratiques socioculturelles africaines et mise sur pied de la modernité: Reconsidérer l'approche anthropologique du local et du global**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Notre expose pose un ensemble de problèmes relatifs au regard actuel porte sur les pratiques culturelles africaines. Nous exposons ces problèmes dans cet article afin de profiter des diverses réactions des uns et des autres. C'est une interrogation par rapport à la situation de l'anthropologie africaine.

Si cette intervention porte sur le face-à-face entre les pratiques socio-culturelles africaines et la mise sur pied de la modernité, c'est parce qu'il est à la mode aujourd'hui pour les projets de développement de "prendre en compte" les pratiques dites traditionnelles. Mais la question que l'on peut se poser est celle de savoir le sens de cette prise en compte. En d'autres termes, est-ce que cette prise en compte vise une compréhension de ces pratiques socio-culturelles dans leur contexte afin de voir les conditions de leur utilisation comme outils de modernisation, ou alors il s'agit juste de rechercher dans les cultures africaines les équivalents des habitudes qu'on observe dans les pays promoteurs du "développement"?

Nous avons été mis en face d'un tel problème dans le cadre des projets de conservation des ressources naturelles ou l'on accorde une importance particulière aux modes traditionnelles de gestion de la nature. Très souvent dans la perspective d'une prise en compte des pratiques locales, les projets de conservation pensent que l'on pourrait trouver dans l'existence des tabous, de "forêts sacrées", de "montagnes sacrées", etc., des pratiques mises sur pied par les cultures africaines en vue de la protection des ressources.

L'intérêt pour les pratiques traditionnelles dans les milieux de conservation a été renforcé par le sommet de la Terre de 1992 à Rio. Durant cette rencontre, il avait été recommandé de "préserver les méthodes traditionnelles de conservation et d'utilisation durable de la diversité biologique" tout en s'en inspirant "aussi largement que possible". Si cela constitue une initiative louable, il demeure un problème, celui de l'interprétation des pratiques

culturelles, de même que celui du concept de “méthodes traditionnelles de conservation” utilise.

## **Le Problème**

Le problème ici est de savoir si les cultures africaines, et particulièrement celles des régions qui connaissent encore l'abondance des ressources naturelles, ont pu développer de façon consciente des pratiques ayant pour but la protection de certaines espèces naturelles? Et peut-on, à juste titre considérer les tabous comme un exemple de ces “méthodes traditionnelles” de conservation?

Il faut tenir compte du fait que la conservation est une “idée de crise” née dans un contexte de dégradation accélérée de la nature en occident alors en plein essor industriel. Si la pratique de la conservation est réelle dans les régions faisant face à une crise des ressources, elle n'est cependant pas universelle et dans la plupart des communautés africaines, cela n'a jamais été un objectif politique pour les peuples qui ne connaissent pas les mêmes problèmes que l'occident.

Par ailleurs, l'objectif classique de la conservation est la protection ou préservation d'espèces ou écosystèmes particuliers contre l'homme considéré comme un destructeur. Or, dans les pratiques africaines une telle conception n'est pas de mise. Il est vrai que les cultures locales ont développé des pratiques religieuses et philosophiques sur lesquelles reposent les rapports de l'homme avec l'environnement naturel. Mais, ces considérations religieuses ou philosophiques, même si elles peuvent être favorables à la conservation, ne sont pas fondées sur une “idéologie de préservation” ou protection de la nature contre l'homme. Cela est d'autant plus évident que les cultures africaines en général n'interdisent pas l'utilisation de la nature (Fisher, 1995), même si la préoccupation quotidienne est le maintien de relations harmonieuses entre cette nature et ses utilisateurs. Dans ce sens, quand on étudie les tabous dans le contexte qui les a engendrés en prenant en compte les logiques qui les soutiennent, on se rend à l'évidence qu'il y a une bonne distance entre ceux qu'ils sont réellement et les préoccupations de conservation.

## **Les tabous chez les communautés forestières du sud-est Cameroun**

Nous avons eu à étudier le système de tabous chez trois communautés forestières du Cameroun: les Baka, les Sakwele et les Sangando de la forêt de Lobeke au niveau de la frontière avec la RCA et le Congo. Notre intérêt s'est

porte sur les restrictions relatives à l'exportation de la faune terrestre, et il s'agissait pour nous de voir si l'existence d'interdits répondait à une nécessité endogène de protection des espèces concernées.

L'étude s'est faite dans un contexte où malgré la compétition que mènent divers intervenants pour l'exploitation des ressources naturelles, les populations locales vivent encore dans l'abondance que leur offre leur environnement immédiat. Parmi les intervenants extérieurs dans ce milieu, il y'a les organismes internationaux (WWF et GTZ) qui, en collaboration avec le Ministère de l'Environnement et des Forêts, entreprennent des activités de conservation de la biodiversité dans la localité. Ces organisations, dans leur recherche de la participation populaire au projet, essaient de voir dans les pratiques endogènes celles qui pourraient être d'un appui pour la réussite de cet objectif.

Les observations que nous avons faites montrent que la plupart des animaux qui entrent dans l'alimentation quotidienne des ménages font l'objet d'un interdit. L'interdiction est en fait une invitation à l'arrêt momentané ou définitif d'une activité. Et ces tabous ne sont valables que pendant certaines périodes de l'existence de l'individu ou il connaît des perturbations physiologiques (maladie, grossesse) ou Change de statut social (rites de passage).

Très souvent, les interdits que nous avons étudiés sont liés à la reproduction humaine. L'homme et la femme sont tenus de les respecter en période de grossesse ou durant la tranche de la vie où les fonctions de reproductions sont encore actives. Lis sont ainsi formulés :

- Tu ne mangeras pas de panthère pendant la grossesse, sinon toi et tes enfants auront la gale;
- Tu ne mangeras pas le *daman*, sinon tes enfants naîtront avec trois doigts coupés comme ceux de cet animal;
- Tu ne mangeras pas le *bongo*, sinon ta progéniture souffrira du *djadja* (maladie infantile qui se manifeste comme de l'épilepsie):
- Tu ne mangeras pas la taupe ou le pangolin pendant la grossesse, sinon tu auras un accouchement difficile;
- Pendant la grossesse de ta femme, tu ne dois pas tuer de gibier avec la machette ou avec le gourdin, sinon l'enfant va naître avec une blessure sur un endroit du corps correspondant à la partie de l'animal que tu as frappé, etc....

L'on se rend compte qu'aucun de ces interdits ne dit qu'il s'agit de protéger l'espèce concernée, On aurait aussi pu dire qu'il existe une fonction latente ou cachée qui est celle de protection. Or, nous avons mentionné plus haut, que toutes ces espèces font l'objet d'une consommation courante par les

populations. L'arrêt de la consommation n'est que momentané et ne concerne qu'une catégorie de la population: les personnes en attente d'enfants ou les femmes.

A y regarder de près, on en arrive au constat qu'il y a une relation entre le comportement physiologique de l'animal concernés, son apparence physique, son mode de défense ou d'habitat et l'interdit qui lui est lié. Par exemple, il y a une analogie entre les tâches de la peau de la panthère et ses semblables (chat sauvage, renard, etc.), les croutes de la carapace du crocodile et l'apparition de la gale sur la peau de l'être humain s'il venait à violer ces tabous. De même, le daman des arbres, dans son apparence physique, à trois doigts qui donnent l'impression d'avoir été sectionné. D'où la croyance selon laquelle les enfants de la femme qui violerait cet interdit natteraient avec des doigts semblables à ceux de cet animal. Quant au bongo, il est souvent pris de spasme quand, fatigué d'être poursuivi, il s'écroule. C'est la raison qui fait penser que la violation de l'interdit qui lui est lié ferait que les enfants à naître soient victimes du *djadja* (maladie infantile qui se manifeste comme de l'épilepsie). La crainte d'un accouchement difficile en cas de violation du tabou du pangolin et de la taupe pourrait s'expliquer par le séjour prolongé de ces deux espèces dans les trous et la difficulté que les chasseurs éprouvent à les déloger de leurs terriers. Au regard de tout cela, l'on peut dire qu'il y a une conception par analogie des caractéristiques des animaux tabous et des conséquences envisageables qui leur sont attachées.

C'est en analysant tous ces facteurs que nous en sommes arrivés à disqualifier la fonction de conservation que l'on semble prêter aux tabous, surtout ceux des communautés forestières de la région de Lobeke au Sud-Est du Cameroun. Au lieu de vouloir, de façon précipitée considérer les restrictions relatives à l'exploitation de la faune comme la manifestation du souci endogène de protéger les espèces visées, ne serait-il pas plus judicieux de les voir comme l'expression d'une conception particulière du monde qui, de prime abord, n'a rien à voir avec l'idéologie de conservation (Akwah Neba, 1999)? Ou les prendre pour le code non écrit des sociétés sans écritures (Freud, 1969)?

Il nous semble que les tabous traduisent plutôt le souci de protéger la société et les hommes contre les dangers du désordre (Laburthe Tolra, 1985), et selon Sigmund Freud (id):

*« Les buts poursuivis par le tabou sont de plusieurs ordres. Les tabous [...] ont pour but: a) de protéger des personnes éminentes, telles que chefs, prêtres[...] contre tout préjudice possible; b) de protéger les faibles: femmes, enfants, hommes en général contre le puissant Mana (force magique) des prières et des chefs ; c) de prévenir les troubles*

*pouvant survenir dans l'accomplissement de certains actes importants de la vie: naissance, initiation des hommes, mariages, fonctions sexuelles, etc. ; e) de protéger les êtres humains contre la puissance ou la colère des dieux et des démons; f) de protéger les enfants à partir ou les tout petits contre les divers dangers qui les menacent du fait de la dépendance sympathique dans laquelle ils se trouvent par rapport à leurs parents, lorsque, par exemple, ceux-ci pratiquent certains actes ou mangent certains aliments dont l'absorption pourrait inspirer aux enfants certaines propriétés particulières... »*

Nous avons là le soutien d'un anthropologue mondialement reconnu pour ses études sur les tabous y qui voit plutôt des préoccupations de protection de la société. La Conception africaine du fonctionnement de la nature, ne fait pas une dichotomie entre l'homme et les autres éléments de l'univers (Bladorme, 1972; Akwah Neba, 1999).

Cet exemple sur les tabous montre que tout au long du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'anthropologie a lu avec beaucoup de clichés les réalités culturelles africaines. “ Y a toujours eu une interprétation déroutants, que ce soit à l'époque de Hegel et Levi Bruhl qu'à l'époque contemporaine, cette dernière étant préoccupés par l'intégration des pratiques culturelles du continent dans le processus du développement. Un bref rappel historique montrerait les différentes approches de prise en compte des pratiques endogènes dans le processus de modernisation de l'Afrique.

Les pratiques socio-culturelles africaines ont été, tout au long de la confrontation avec l'Occident. Vues avec des clichés par ceux-là qui tentent d'implanter le “développement” sur le continent. Les promoteurs de ce “développement” ont, au départ, eu une attitude de rejet vis-à-vis de tout ce qui est non-Occident, avant d'opérer, vers la deuxième moitié du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, une sorte de réorientation comportementale, laquelle consiste désormais à considérer les pratiques locales, non plus comme des obstacles, mais comme des adjudantes. Seulement, l'une ou l'autre attitude repose sur une analyse fondamentalement exogènes avec un outillage conceptuel destiné à d'autres réalités (Mbonji, 1986 et 1988). De même, les fondements même du développement prêtent le flanc à une interprétation peu correcte des réalités africaines.

## **La notion de développement**

Le développement, ici, doit être entendu comme une réalité exogène qui cherche une assise dans des cultures disposant d'une rationalité propre. Tout au long du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, le développement a été conçu moins comme un processus qu'un état à atteindre par les peuples non occidentaux considérés



comme “sous développés”. Vues comme obstacles au départ, les cultures africaines ont fait l’objet de rejet par l’idéologie développementaliste qui fait de l’Occident le modèle universel à suivre.

### **Le développement par rejet des cultures**

Les premiers pas du développement de l’Afrique, entendu comme tentative d’instauration du modèle occidental, se sont faits dans une perspective de remplacement des valeurs culturelles locales par celles du “civilisateur”. Vues comme étant à un stade Inferieur de la “civilisation”, elles n’étaient nullement considérées comme facteurs majeurs à prendre en compte. L’on postulait leur évacuation puis remplacement rapide par des principes nouveaux. Mais au fil du temps, l’on a pris conscience, de l’impossibilité de réaliser quelque projet que ce soit sans faire face aux logiques endogènes, C’est vers les années 30 et 40 que la nécessité d’une recherche sociale appliquée s’impose au développement international. L’anthropologie est dès lors sollicitée afin d’étudier les cultures non occidentales dont on reconnaît désormais l’influence sur toutes les tentatives de “développement” (Coreil & Mull, S.d.).

### **La prise en compte des pratiques culturelles endogènes**

Le développement étant, dès les origines, conçu comme transfert de technologie et d’idéologie, l’on s’est heurté à la difficulté d’intégrer ces éléments étrangers dans des cultures ayant des logiques différentes de celles qui ont conçu ces projets. C’est pour pallier à cette difficulté qu’une vaste campagne de recherche sur les cultures dites primitives a été lancée par les programmes de développement international, avec pour perspective l’application des résultats.

Mais la prise en compte des pratiques endogènes ne visait en aucun cas l’intégration de celles-ci dans le processus de mise sur pied de la modernité. La tâche principale assignée aux anthropologues d’alors était celle d’identifier les “barrières culturelles” qui empêchent l’innovation (Coreil & Mull, S.d.). Le but vise était de trouver le moyen de diffuser aisément la technologie nouvelle en venant à bout des résistances au changement qu’on considérait inhérentes aux traditions locales.

Sur le plan conceptuel, la recherche anthropologique, en ce moment, devait permettre aux organisations internationales de trouver les pistes permettant d’amener les peuples non occidentaux à adopter les nouvelles pratiques. Un modèle dualiste fut développé, lequel opposait tradition et

modernité. Ainsi, fallait-il opposer les pratiques agricoles nouvelle aux pratiques endogènes appelées à être remplacées car considérées comme peu productives et destructrices de l'environnement; les pratiques endogènes de reproduction étaient opposées (et continue de l'être) aux méthodes de planning familial érigées en modèles. Quelque soit le domaine concerne, les faits culturels endogènes étaient catégorisés "facteurs à risque" donc défavorables aux idées nouvelles (Coreil & Mull, id.). La recherche visait à montrer l'impact négatif des pratiques dites traditionnelles sur la vie des populations, puis proposer des canaux de sensibilisation en vue de leur abandon. Par exemple, des recherches menées sur les pratiques alimentaires ou sexuelles endogènes n'avaient pas pour ambition de découvrir ce qu'elles ont de positif, mais essayaient plutôt de les invalider en montrant l'immoralité ou l'irrationalité.

Toutefois, dans les années 1970, face aux multiples échecs des programmes initient en vue de l'amélioration des conditions de vie des populations par l'approche de "changement des mentalités", l'on a commencé à penser que les pratiques socioculturelles endogènes pouvaient être un appui dans l'atteinte des objectifs de développement. C'est alors, que des questions ont commencé d'être posées de savoir qu'elles "alternatives" inhérentes aux cultures locale pouvaient mieux permettre le démarrage du "développement".

Les concepts de "technologie appropriée" et de "pratiques alternatives" apparues dans le vocabulaire du développement sont la résultante de cette nouvelle tournure d'esprit en ce qui concerne l'approche des communautés. Dans cette optique, l'OMS, par exemple, en vue de promouvoir une santé communautaire plus efficace a catégorisé la médecine dite traditionnelle "médecine alternative".

La prise en compte des pratiques culturelles endogènes est devenue une préoccupation si importante qu'aucune politique de développement ne bénéficierait du crédit des bailleurs de fonds que si cet aspect fait partie intégrante des projets. D'où les prescriptions internationales sur la nécessaire considération du traditionnel. Au sommet de Rio, par exemple, il avait été demandés aux gouvernements de "préserver les méthodes traditionnelles de conservation et d'utilisation durable de la diversité biologique" et de "s'en inspirer aussi largement que possible" (Sachs, cite par Sahuchet, 1997).

Mais le souci du monde contemporain de mettre les pratiques socioculturelles endogènes au service du développement n'ont pas balayé les clichés qui encombrant la lecture de celles-ci. D'où la nécessité pour l'anthropologie africaine de se pencher sur cette question afin de se sortir des prisons théoriques dans lesquelles elle est aujourd'hui incarcérée.

## Le Futur Anthropologique de L'Afrique

Comme nous l'avons mentionné ci-dessus, la recherche anthropologique en Afrique, de même que les anthropologues africains se sont jusqu'ici couchés sur "la natte des autres" (Ki.Zerbo, 1992). Cette "natte des autres" est tissée d'un "outillage théorique ... inféode au moule euro-américain qui l'a génère"(Mbonji, 1986) et ne permet pas une lecture judicieuse des réalités de l'Afrique. N'est-il pas temps de procéder à une *sécession épistémologique* (peut-être sélective) et inventer par soi-même les paradigmes qui permettent de comprendre la société africaine? Si tant est qu'un paradigme est "un référentiel, un concept cadre par rapport auquel s'ordonnent, se subordonnent et se classent un grand nombre d'autres concepts et idées dans un champ donne des connaissances" et qu'il constitue "un principe d'ordre du savoir et de l'action" (Ki Zerbo, id:9), alors les chercheurs africains n'ont pas d'autres choix que de trouver ceux qui sont appropriés à leurs sociétés afin d'être à mesure de les contrôler de l'intérieur. Ce n'est que de cette façon que l'on aboutira à une nouvelle approche du local et du global, synonyme de libération conceptuelle.

La recherche sur l'Afrique, jusqu'aujourd'hui, continue d'être conçue par des "africanistes" occidentaux qui sont en même temps les fabricants des outils et des limites de celle-ci (Kwesi Kwaa Prah, 1998). La production et la reproduction de la connaissance sur l'Afrique restent inféodées dans ce moule occidental. C'est la raison de ce paternalisme scientifique que l'on observe aujourd'hui chez les chercheurs du Nord qui veulent "aider" ceux du Sud à se connecter au monde de la science. Comme le dit Micere Githae Mugo (cite par Kwesi Kwaa Prah, id.):

*« ... concernant les études sur l'Afrique; ainsi que la politique néocoloniale, la plupart d'entre nous avons contribué activement à la tradition de s'octroyer des parrains (et certainement des marraines) qui, places sur un piédestal, se trouvent hors de portée de toute critique et de toute remise en question. Le chercheur africain lui, occupe souvent le statut de filleul. C'est ainsi que, lorsque ce dernier est épelé à jouer un rôle dans l'Université américaine, on s'attend à ce qu'il observe strictement les limites et les strates entre lesquelles il est pris en sandwich. Mieux encore, on s'attend à ce qu'il siffle l'aire que son partitionniste au financier peut jouer à tout moment ... »*

L'Université africaine est appelée jouer un rôle de premier plan dans cette reconstruction de la science sur le continent. Pour cela, il faut qu'elle définisse, pour le prochain millénaire, "Les missions qui lui incombent ... mais aussi ses implications dans la politique et les pratiques" (Akilagpa Sawyer, 1998).

“To survive, all cultures need each other”, disait Edward Hall (cite par Kaniowska et Markowska, 1998: 8). Nous devons nous demander comment nos cultures et nous-mêmes, tout en restant ouverts aux autres, pouvons maintenir une personnalité qui soit d’un apport pour les aspects universels de l’existence. Telle devrait être la préoccupation existentielle de la recherche et des chercheurs africains actuels.

## Conclusion

Ce papier a jeté un regard sur les considérations actuelles des pratiques culturelles africaines par le “développement”, Prenant l’exemple des tabous dans la conservation, nous avons vu que la réalité culturelle africaine est interprétée à l’aide d’un outillage théorique non adapté. Nous avons ensuite fait une rétrospective pour montrer que malgré les efforts en vue d’intégrer les pratiques endogènes dans le processus de modernisation, les clichés demeurent et continuent de se conforter. Des lors, le seul choix salutaire consiste, pour les chercheurs africains, à devenir maîtres de leur propre destin scientifique. Cette maîtrise passe par une invention endogène des paradigmes dont ils auront besoin. Le local ne continuera d’exister que s’il sait résister aux ambitions hégémoniques du global.

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## Mythology and the Gender Question: The African Experience

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### Introduction

*The battles fought over the relation between nature and culture, between human biology and human society, are forever recurring. Each cultural period reworks the theme, and redefines the problem*

(Lynne Segal, 1987:7)

Certain principles or belief systems usually underpin social relations. These principles or belief systems, even when they remain the basis for our social actions, are not always explicitly manifested in such relationships. In other words, the individuals are not always conscious of them. This could sound curious, since one would expect that if our actions were based on a particular phenomenon, we would be aware of it. But such belief systems become part of the individual's worldview through the various processes of acculturation in the society. We grow up seeing things from a particular point of view. And this point of view usually reflects the theories of realities embodied by our cultural cosmos.

Having imbibed a particular point of view, whatever appears to be a deviation from it is usually seen as a misnomer. Or, as Peter Stillman (1977) puts it: "We have always found it convenient to view others with eyes so shuttered by our own values, our world view, that those of another people appear 'primitive' and foolish by comparison". In short, with time a particular way of doing things becomes to a people the *right* way of doing it. And without caring to look at things from another perspective, we sometimes find ourselves defending as universal a purely relativist or particularistic position.

Kai Nielsen (1987: 112) contends that in all societies, the social relation of people is governed not always by facts or reasons, but rather, "a cluster of distorted legitimating beliefs" which when "taken in Clusters", provide the people with legitimating myth:

*These false beliefs and their associated mistaken attitudes are the norms and attitudes that go to make up important elements of our world picture and our social*

*consciousness and they prompt us to commend as legitimate or at least to accept as necessary a network of institutions and practices of highly repressive character ... (Ibid.)*

One way by which most societies, especially those without the privilege of writing have transmitted such beliefs that have come to underscore the social relations among the people is through folktales, fables or what we sometimes refer to as myths. Sometimes, the stories sound so fantastic that we are tempted to believe that they serve no other purpose beyond entertainment. Even today, the mention of myth only brings to our memories, the picture of some fabulous tales told by idle minds. This is an interpretation that tends to sever myth from reality, especially the social realities as people live them at a particular point in time. Put differently,

*Myths somehow do seem to belong to another time, another place. They have an alien flavour and are most often judged to be what someone else believes. Many of the myths we have been exposed to in children books, movies, even literature texts reinforce cherished, misbegotten ideas about one's own racial superiority. For we have been led to understand that myth reflects an attempt by primitive societies to unravel through fanciful tales the nature, of human beings and the cosmos.*

*It is not a far-leap from that assumption that societies who base their religion and hence their deepest values on quaint and colourful myths are out of step with the modern world and, therefore, backward (Stillman, 1977).*

But as I said above, this can only be a misconception of myths, and more importantly, the roles they continue to play in the shaping of social relations in every culture. In other words, even though they are usually presented in their timelessness (*once upon a time*), myths are not as distant from social realities as they sometimes appear to be. On the contrary, they are actually “living realities” which invariably influence our actions in the society. Max Muller (1873) has suggested that; “There is mythology now as there was in the time of Homer, only we do not perceive it, and because we ourselves live in the very shadow of it...” This can hardly be an exaggeration. Myth, as I have noted elsewhere, can actually be described as “the sole of a society. It is a people’s myth that sustains their social life. Without a myth, it would be difficult, if not impossible for a people to live together” (see Uroh, 1999:214). For myth helps to “illustrate how the world exists for us and spotlights the resources and anxieties which flourish in our situation” (Adesanya, 1999:225).

But it is important to note at this stage, the point made by Sarpong (1974:126) to the effect that:



*Myths speak, but because they speak in symbols, they require trained interpreters to render their language meaningful ... There can be as many interpretations of one myth as the experts who analyse it.*

My concern in this paper is to establish a causal connection between the age<sup>c</sup> long marginalization of women in virtually every society, and deep-seated belief systems as communicated through various myths in Africa. The paper, in other words, examines how myths have been used as the basis for the displacement of the African woman especially in the political space.

The remaining part of the paper is divided into two parts. The first part narrates three women-related myths from three different African settings. The second part examines how the interpretation of these and related myths has served as the basis for justifying the marginalization of women in contemporary African societies. The paper ends by making a case for the reinterpretation of these myths in a rather more gender neutral, or possibly pro-feminist, manner. The idea being that such a reinterpretation will lead to a new perception of the woman and could, with time, help in the political empowerment of women.

Let me start with the myth of “how **death came to the world**” among the Igbo of Southeast Nigeria. This myth, to a very large extent, corroborates the Biblical account which implicates Eve, the ‘first woman’, for the *original sin* by which every human is assumed, in the Christian world to have *inherited death*. Though today we may not easily see any direct linkage with it and the present position of the Igbo woman, the truth however, is that this particular myth has a lot of implications for the status of the woman within the Igbo society.

According to this myth, human beings were not created from the beginning of time to die. For this reason people were not dying as a result of old age. When they were old enough they went for a kind of hibernation in a grove. There they *shed their old age* and became younger again. We, however, lost this privilege of immortality due to the greediness of an old woman and her granddaughter. As the story goes: The old woman had gone into the grove leaving an instruction that she should not be disturbed throughout the period of her hibernation. For one is not supposed to be disturbed while the process was on. But even then, this *greedy old woman* is said to have put *fufu* on the fire with the intention of eating immediately after she left the grove. She had left her granddaughter to look after the food. The unexpected, however, happened. Before the process was completed, her granddaughter noticed that the *fufu* was getting burnt.

The little girl *out of her own greediness too* and the fear that she might go hungry afterward would not allow the *fufu* to get burnt. So, faced with the



choice of going hungry and the immortality of her grandmother, and by implication hers too, the little girl ignored the earlier instruction not to disturb her grandmother and so, ran into the grove to alert her about the food that was about to get burnt. Immediately the old woman sighted her the *rebirth* process stopped. The old woman was said to have cursed her grand-child after, saying that since she had made her to lose her immortality, generations after her would *live only for a limited time and die*. According to this myth, humans *stopped living forever* afterward. I will return to this later.

Now, let me take the second myth which is the Akan myth of how the sky (i.e. God) became separated from the earth, and by implication, how human beings lost direct contact with Onyankopon or Onyame (God). According to this myth, God and humans were initially living together and so were in direct contact. People always approached Onyame to attend to their problems. This made life easier for them. However, this blissful moment was lost to humans because of the action of one *greedy old woman* who invented the mortar and pestle with which she pounded her *fufu*. As the story goes: each time the woman pounded her *fufu* her pestle hit the sky. Onyame was as a result disturbed. Despite several complaints by Onyame, the old woman would not change. After several warnings, Onyame decided to move “farther and farther up into the sky”. This way, it was no longer possible for the people to have Onyame attend to their problems the way he used to do while he was with them.

The old woman, on realizing what she had done, thought of how the people could re-establish contact with Onyame. She suggested that every household should contribute their mortars. These they piled on one another with the intention of making out of them a ladder through which they could reach up to Onyame. The idea sounded novel at the beginning. The people found themselves getting closer to Onyame. But their joy was short-lived. For at a stage, it dawned on the community that they did not have enough mortars to make the kind of mortar they had in mind. In fact they needed just one more mortar to get to Onyame. The searched for one mortar commenced and went on for a long time. It was not successful. The old woman came up with another way of tackling the problem. She suggested that they should remove the mortar at the base of the ladder and place it on top. The people agreed with him. However, the moment that was done the whole pile crumbled. All the people went away disappointed. Nobody tried to repeat it. And since then, the story concludes, the sky (the place of abode of Onyame) has remained high up beyond the reach of humans.

The import of this myth is that the whole community, and by implication, the whole of humanity is made to suffer *because of the greed of one woman*. The message here is that the woman is greedy and self-centred.

The third myth, this time from the Yoruba of Southwest Nigeria, is contained in the **Ifa Corpus**. This myth is particularly interesting to us in this paper because here is a case where, unlike the two myths earlier narrated (where the woman is seen to be responsible for the presence of death), here we see the woman being the one that made the *defeat* of **Death** possible. But even then, the narrative is still turned against the woman. Ordinarily, one would have thought that it was a credit if a woman's act leads to the elimination of death. Rather than commend the woman in this instance, she is condemned.

According to this myth, which could be found in the Ifa verse called **Oyekumeji**, Iku (i.e. Death) one day got the news that his mother had been killed in the Ejigbomekun marketplace. Naturally, Death who had the capacity to kill anybody, however powerful, ran to the marketplace with the intention of avenging the killing of his mother. On his way, and partly to demonstrate his destructive potentials, Death destroyed anything that he could lay his hands on. Knowing that it was a particular tree that had fought his mother, Death pulled down all the trees on the way to the market no matter their sizes.

On *realizing* the danger ahead, **Ayunre** (a rather weak tree) *which* was alleged to have killed Death's mother, rather than engage Death *in* a duel, engaged the services of Olojongbodun, the wife of Death. This is the rest of the story as narrated in by Wande Abimbola (1975) in his **Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa**:

*She (i.e. Death's wife) was called early in the morning. / And asked what her husband must not eat! That made him able to kill other people's children about. / She asked for what they would give her. / She said that she would take two hundred oke measures of cowries! After she had taken the money. / She said Death, her husband, must not eat rats. / They asked, "What would happen if he ate rats"? / She said, "The hands of Death would shake without stop". / She said Death, her husband must not eat fish. / They asked "What would happen if he ate fish"? / She said, "The feet of Death would shake without stop". / She said Death her husband must not eat duck's egg. / They asked, "What would happen if he ate duck's egg"? / She said, "Death would vomit without stop". / She said Death her husband must not eat **elebute**. / They asked, "What would happen if he ate elebute"? / She said, "Death would become very weak".*

Now all the forbidden food to Death, which his wife had revealed to Ayunre, was offered as sacrifice to him. Without suspecting Death ate them before he got to Ayunre. Perhaps, it should be stated here that the Yoruba believe that everybody has his or her *eevo*, something forbidden for him or her. Breaking this usually has specified consequences. Therefore on getting to where he was going to fight, Death had lost all his powers. It was therefore not difficult for Ayunre to defeat him. This is how Abimbola (Ibid.) further narrated it:

*They gave rats to Death/Death ate rats / And his hands started to shake without stop / They gave fish to Death/Death ate fish/And his feet started to shake without stop / They gave duck" egg to Death/Death ate duck" egg/And he started to vomit without stop / They gave **elebute** to death/Death ate e/ebute /And he became extremely weak/Death fell upon Ayunre tree/Ayunre tree shifted aside/Death slipped suddenly/And fell chest down/Death Slipped suddenly/And fell down with a loud noise.*

As I said earlier, one would have thought that by making it possible for Death to be defeated Olojongbodu's act would be perceived as praiseworthy, that it is one which clears the way for the defeat of Death, which literally speaking, would mean opening the way for human *immortality* of some sort. But rather this being the case, Olojongodu's action, which usually interpreted as being typical of women, is condemned. And so, this Ifa verse warns:

*Women are liars, / Women are Traitors.  
Let no man open his mind to women (Abimbola, Ibid.).*

It is important to note the affinity which these myths share with some Biblical imagery of the woman. We are all familiar for instance, with the story of the Original Sin presented as having been brought to the world by the transgression of Eve, the first woman. This has apparently, influenced derogative narrative about the woman in Scripture. For instance, Apostle Paul, among others, presented women as sinful and incapable of providing leadership. In his famous letter to the *Corinthians*, Paul did not only state that the woman is inferior to man but also, gave the impression that she is not *good* enough for her to be appointed as God's minister or priest. The woman Paul says is supposed to be perpetually under the dominion of the man. For, as he puts it, while the head of every man is Christ "the head of every woman is man".

It is against this background that he declared that while praying a man does not need to cover his head. This is because a man is the image and glory of God. But the woman who is only for the glory of the man should. He continues: “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man”. He concludes; “the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head”. This is why she must cover her head while praying.

Paul followed this up in the letter to *Timothy* (1 Chapter 2; verses, 11-15), where he warned women against speaking in the church, saying that it is irreverent and debasing to God for them to do so. His words:

*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.*

This reminds one of a similar declaration in the *Glorious Koran* to the effect that; “Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, because they spend their property (for the support of women). So, good women are obedient guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded.”

The implications of this pejorative imagery of the woman in religion are many. This is understandable considering the role religion plays in the conduct of social affairs, especially in the determination of social roles in traditional societies. To begin with, there is what I call the *divination* of the societal *devaluation* of womanhood, by which I mean the way an essentially social construct is presented as a divinely sanctioned practice. In doing this, men only implicate God for their own *exclusionist* construct. The rather systemic displacement of the woman in the decision-making process is justified on the dubious ground that this is how God has made it to be “from the beginning of time”. The argument here then becomes that the woman whatever her expertise or level of education, “will always be a woman”; by which, it is meant that she will remain for the most part, *unreliable, irresponsible, fickle-minded*, and above all, *ready to give away anything for the sake of material gains*.

Aristotle (1952) ranked high among those thinkers who never saw any leadership quality in the woman. “The male”, he declares, “is more fitted to rule than the female, unless conditions are quite abnormal”. In other words, unless there are no men to hold positions of authority, it would be out of place to give that role to a woman. This is one of the reasons Aristotle condemned democracy as a system of government. Democracy, he says, makes it possible

for women, to take part in decision-making processes in the State. He sums up his anti-feminist disposition when he writes:

“Between male and female, this relationship of superior and inferior is permanent”.

Hegel (1973) shared this perception about women, maintaining that there are variations in the *abilities* of the two sexes, with the man having an upper hand over the woman: “The natural determinacies of both sexes acquire, through its reasonableness, *intellectual* as well as *ethical* significance”. He goes on:

*Thus one sex is mind in its self-dissection into explicit self-subsistence and the knowledge and volition of free universality, i. e. the self-consciousness of conceptual thought and the volition of the objective final end. The other sex is mind maintaining itself in unity as knowledge and volition in the form of concrete individuality and feeling. In relation to externality, the former is powerful and active, the latter passive and subjective. It follows that man has his actual substantive life in the state, in learning and so forth, as well as in labour and struggle with the external world and with himself so that it is only out of his disruption that he fights his way to self-subsistent unity with himself. In the family, he has a tranquil intuition of this unity, and there he lives a subjective ethical life on the plane of feeling. **The woman, on the other hand, has her substantive destiny in the family, and to be imbued with family piety is her ethical frame of mind** (Ibid.)*

It is interesting to note that modern political theorists, perhaps with a few exceptions, all written from this standpoint that “sex differentiation” also equates differential in abilities, and above all, that this alone determines the roles men and women play in the society. What has followed from this is the “domestication of the feminine or better still, the feminization of the domestics” in virtually every society one can think of (Uroh, 1999a). And what’s more, the internalization of this thesis has resulted in *womanhood and manhood having different political meaning*.

Furthermore, in the *subject-citizen* categorization, or the ruled-ruler bifurcation of social stratification, *women and women matters take precedence only after children*. Interestingly, through the process of acculturation some women have also internalized this rather negative perception of the woman. This partly explains why even when some of them venture into politics they are contented with playing some peripheral roles such the level of *women wing* of their parties, as we had in Nigeria until recently, or as the *first ladies* of their states, regions or council areas, as the case may be. Few women have actually aspired to the topmost position, especially when the position at stake is an

elective one. In this sense, we see that, “the different attribute, capacities and characteristics ascribed to men and women by political theorists have become central to the way in which each has defined the political” (Pateman and Shanley, 1991 910). Or, what means the same thing:

*Manhood and politics go hand-in-hand, and everything that stands in contrast to and opposed to political life and the political virtues has been represented by women; their capacities and the tasks seen as natural to their sex, especially motherhood (Ibid. 3).*

Needless to state here that this “systematic exclusion of women from taking part in and as full members and citizens of the polity in political debate, deliberation and contest” is the greatest wrong to womanhood (Ibid.). For this, as Pateman and Shanley (Ibid.) rightly observe, has led to less attention being paid to women matters.

There are many ways in which this biologization of the sex role and its consequent devaluation of womanhood have adversely affected the African woman in a way women from other cultures may not. To start with, it has led to the systematic denial to women of the opportunities provided by some development initiatives sponsored by international agencies. Two areas where such denials have become apparent are in the acquisition of land and access to credit facilities.

Let me start by noting that women constitute some eighty percent of agricultural labour, in Africa. This fact will help us in understanding the enormity of the problem. Now, customary laws “discriminate against women in the allocation and acquisition of land” (Rathgeber, 1992:13). Women in many African societies by tradition are not entitled to land of their own. They can only acquire and own land by proxy, that is, through their husbands or other relations. This is explicable partly by the fact that wives are traditionally considered as constituting part of their husbands’ property or, in fact the property of their husbands’ families. And as such, they cannot be entitled to own property. And if by chance any woman owns a property, such property is considered as belonging to their husbands. This belief and the practices deriving from it reduce the quantity of land which women can effectively control. This therefore reduces most women to mere *labourers* on their husbands’ farmland.

In addition, the introduction of cash *crops* into the economy of most African societies during the colonial era worsened matters for women. It deepened the inequality in gender relations in more than one way. To begin with, the already anti-women cultural practices disqualified women from



growing cash crops. They were allowed to grow only arable and easily perishable crops, which were either eaten up by their family members or sold off at cheaper prices at the local market. However, men grew the more economically viable cash crops. Need I add here that this has further widened the gap between the rural men and women in many African societies even till date?

This apart, since the acquisition of credit facilities usually requires that those seeking such facilities have some property as securities, it has also meant that the low economic standing of the women has deprived most of them of those opportunities. And so, even when they have nice ideas about how to carry out some business ventures, they are handicapped if they must source for funding from funding agencies.

In the area of education women have not fared better. The African woman has been a victim of a rather prejudiced belief system that places more premiums on the *proper* upbringing of the *male* child, at the expense of his *female* counterpart. The male child is seen in many African societies as the *bearer* of the “family’s name”, the heir apparent. Unlike the male child who is expected “to carry forth the name of the family and so immortalize the lineage”, the female child is perceived more or less as a *temporary* member of the family, who, soon becomes a member of her would be husband’s family. Whatever resources expended on training her therefore, is seen as a waste. When a particular family is pressed for funds and they have a choice to make between educating their girl-child or the boy, the boy would almost automatically win the day however brilliant her sister might be. This has its implications, one of which is that with literacy increasingly becoming “a requirement for jobs, illiterate women who were denied educational opportunities in early life, is being displaced from employment opportunities” (Rathgeber, 1992: 18).

Added to all this is the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) by many African States. Ordinarily, one would think that SAP affects every citizen in Africa and so, as a policy, SAP is gender-neutral. But that misses the point in that it amounts to an oversight and over simplification of the real issues at stake. For, while both men and women participate and are affected by economic adjustment policies, the truth remains that different gender is affected differently. This is so because, in as much as “men and women play different roles” in the society, they invariably face different constraints in responding to economic policy Changes and to shifts in relative prices and incentives”. The 1990 Report of a Commonwealth Expert Group on Women and Structural Adjustment elaborated upon this point. The Report noted, among other things, that women have suffered disproportionately from

the debt crisis and adjustment policies, not only as producers and workers in formal-sector employment but also as reproducers who have been forced to provide a private and individual basic health and other social services which formerly were provided by the state (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1990).

The above point becomes clearer when we acknowledge that the structural adjustment policies always lead to the “reduction of government and donor support for social services” (Mbiliyi, 1994:23) which consequently results to increase in “women’s work in the home and community” since women as the domesticated gender are the ones to take care of these social services, which the state has stopped to provide. Take for instance, any state policy that affects the price of cooking fuel in a country like Nigeria. This will mean that the woman would have to work extra hours to fetch firewood as substitute for cooking fuel. This also means that she would have lesser time to engage in economically profitable ventures. In all, as Rathgeber has graphically presented the matter:

*Women in developing countries (now) work longer hours, earn less money, have greater responsibilities, are less literate and numerate and have lower caloric intake in proportion to body weight than do men. In countries and among social groups where there are few opportunities to escape from poverty, women usually have none. In situations where everyone must work long hours to secure sufficient income to provide basic needs, women must work even longer, for they are faced not only with the necessity to contribute to household income but also must undertake all or most of the reproductive labour, including bearing and caring for children, preparation of food, looking after the elderly, nursing the sick and the multitude of other tasks that are labelled “women work” in most parts of the world (Rathgeber, 1992:11).*

The message here is self-explanatory. With such constraints on her way, it would take some kind of miracle for the African woman, even if she were interested, to perform any meaningful role in the socio-political life of her state. I only need to add here that largely the negative narratives that the woman has had in our folklore have brought about this situation even when they seem far from it. These negative narratives have constituted the bedrock for the fossilization of stereotypes, social categorization and consequently, social stratification against women.

## **Conclusion**

What follows from the foregoing is that if we must win women the battle for gender equality, political empowerment, and socio-culturally reposition the



African woman, then a lot of *deconstruction* of the existing narrative on the African woman has become imperative. Can't we tell a story for instance, where Olojongbodu, the wife of Death, in the Yoruba myth would take credit for exposing him and therefore bringing Death to shame? That actually appears to me as a more logical story line to tell than the conclusion which sees it only from the point of view of a betrayal on the part of Death's wife? Are there no periods when a higher obligation, would require that one break an initial one? Isn't the obligation to eliminate Death higher than that of keeping ones matrimony?

Why, one may want to ask further, can't the old woman in the Akan myth of separation narrated above not get commendation for rallying "the whole community in the *effort* to bring God back", even if we grant, for the moment, that she was responsible for the problem in the first place? For, as Brigid Sackey (1999:222) has rightly observed, seeing things from that perspective would have made us see the woman "as a unifying factor attempting to restore harmony between divinity and humanity rather than a symbol of disintegration as the general interpretation of the myth seem to suggest". And also, isn't the whole idea that the old woman was responsible for the separation of Onyame from the earth a misrepresentation of facts? For "even though the fufu was pounded by an old woman she might not have consumed it alone". Isn't it possible that she fed her whole family including her *husband* and *sons* therefrom? Can we also rule out the possibility that the old woman actually did the pounding at the instance of her husband, and that the husband, as Sackey (Ibid.) suggests, "had the greatest portion of the fufu"? Why do we then exonerate the man?

Similar questions could be asked in connection with the old woman in the Igbo myth of how death came to the world. Was she the only one to eat the fufu? Isn't it possible that she was also considering her husband and other members of the household by putting the fufu on fire even when she knew that it could go bad in the process?

I think it is when we start to interrogate these and similar questions that the process of repositioning the woman in the folkloric narratives and, consequently, the society would be said to have really started. This, I also believe, is what Deborah Cameron (1985:1423) means when she writes:

*Feminists have their own version of the Tower of Babel story. They feel that men have undermined women by confounding their language, the language of their bodies, their conscious, their desire or their experience. In order to act together an authentic language of women must be forged. If there is no common language there can be no collective action.*

It is on this understanding that I put this as a research agenda for the African scholars especially the Cultural Anthropologists who are interested in gender matters. If we must understand the cultural prejudice which has also shaped the political marginalization of the woman; I see no better issue for the Woman Feminist Anthropologist in Africa today.

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## Between Reggae and Rap: Music and Identity among Ethiopian Adolescents in Israel: A Case in Anxiety and Celebration

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In Israel today there are about 75,000 Ethiopian Jews, among them over 10,000 adolescents between 12 and 18.2% of them were born in Israel. Ethiopian adolescents, whether they immigrated from Ethiopia, or were born in Israel, are in the midst of an identity reformation process, due to their development stage as adolescents, and the transition of their parents and themselves from Ethiopia to Israel that play an important role in their experiences. In addition, it seems as if their relations and identification with specific musical genres, such as reggae and rap, have a major role to play and part in the identity process.

I have recently completed 18 months of fieldwork among Ethiopian adolescents, which was aimed at studying and understanding the dialogue that Ethiopian adolescents carry with these musical genres. My fieldwork included: a) participant observation at the nightclubs in which Ethiopian adolescents spend their time; most of them are either exclusively Ethiopian or dominated by Ethiopian adolescents. b) In-depth interviews with adolescents I met the clubs, as well as in other adolescents I recruited for the interviews from underprivileged adolescents, and high-achieving adolescents. Altogether 70 interviews. During the summer of 1998, I visited Jamaica, to participate in Sumfest, the annual Reggae festival, and met with colleagues, who are studying and working on Jamaican culture and on music and adolescents in Jamaica in particular.

Firth (1996), Lull (1987), and others suggest different approaches and focuses to the study of music and identity. Aspects of Authenticity, Cultural space and Relations to significant others are the main venues which I have chosen to use in my analysis. I will now present some of the more significant findings in the case study of Ethiopian adolescents and their music.

Identification with black music is being expressed in several ways or degrees:

- The first one, is by **listening** as individuals and in groups,
- The second is by **club going**, and dancing.

- The third is by **appropriation** of external markers and symbols, as well as ideas and information based on these musical genres.
- The third one is relevant in the two forms of identification.

The identification with these musical genres creates a social-cultural space (both physically and mentally) where these adolescents are located and active. These findings apply to the majority of Ethiopian adolescents. Among them, are those who identify exclusively with Reggae, those few who identify exclusively with Rap. But most of them do not have a significant identification with one of these musical genres, as they were mostly exposed at the nightclubs to the Ragamuffin style, through which they express their identity through dance.

Among Ethiopian adolescents, there are few individuals who are the exception; these keep to themselves and consciously avoid from the majority, reject the music, and keep out of the social scenes and its life style.

For Ethiopian adolescents, the interaction with these musical genres is a **mechanism of boundary creation** between themselves and others; between themselves and their parents, between themselves and the Israeli society, at large.

Moreover, it is a **mechanism for closeness and intimacy**, and the creation of community life with other black people around the world; African Americans, Jamaicans and Africans.

Through the music they establish their **otherness** in Israeli society, where colour becomes the major (predominant) criteria.

The clubs are spaces which foster those behaviours that are contrary to those of the family and the Ethiopian cultural ones, among them, fashion, alcohol, and sexual encounters.

Adolescents are doing everything they can to reach these places: by hitchhiking, arranged transportation, cheating on their parents and educators, and leading ambivalent lives. Many of them are studying in religious schools and live traditional and observant lives at home.

### **The Research Findings Show that:**

Their identification with Reggae and rap is not based on a high degree of **authenticity**; that is, on knowledge and familiarity with the sources, contents and meanings of the songs, but on partial and accidental “bits and pieces”. This is mostly identification with or imitation based on MTV, and what they have been exposed to in the nightclubs. Several activities have been identified as aiming and contributing to increase authenticity. Such as the newsletter, by

one of the club owners supplying information regarding links between Ethiopia and Jamaica, news of the reggae world, cultural heroes, etc. Also, in a weekly radio program, he adds more updated knowledge and news, together with messages towards the Ethiopian adolescents that are aimed at encouraging the link and identification with what he considered as “their music”.

Ragamuffin is considered by Cooper 1998, as a bridging genre between reggae and Rap. It is the dominant genre at the Dancehall Scene, a musical space where most of the adolescents are frequent. Within this space, they play out their identity.

Especially for women and girls, this genre brought a unique way of expression and celebration, through dressing style, body language related to the dance movement, and the context in which this style emerged from the film “Dancehall Queen”.

So, ragamuffin allows and empowers girls to cross traditional cultural borders, and move to alternative space in which they have unique and significantly different experiences as women. They dress, dance; communicate in ways almost contrary to what might be imagined in their parents’ tradition and expectations.

In this context, it is interesting to emphasize that one of the issues that the girls are concerned with as regards their fellow girlfriend’s behaviours, is keeping boundaries observing the limits of acceptable behaviour.

Appraisal as well as criticism of other adolescents is thus used, in these spaces to mark new borders based on their ideas of acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours. From my initial analysis of the interviews, with all the different categories of adolescents, the **most prominent findings** are that:

Ethiopian adolescents feel and experience a deep sense of otherness, as well as being unaccepted in Israeli society;

They identify with the present experiences of other blacks in the world, which are based on their colour racism and ethnocentrism and their struggle for positive self-image and achievements, rather than with their past (as Ethiopian adolescents emphasize that they were never slaves).

They reckon that the current state of segregation and separation is a state that will be hard to change, although, they believe that their colour will be the most critical and determining factor for the success or failure to realize them, or explain their failures.

And finally, there is a major crisis and ever-widening gap between parents and adolescents in the Ethiopian community.

The identification with black music is a **mechanism of survival and shelter**, and within this process, the solidification of identity as “others” as a minority group within Israeli society is crystallizing.

The Jewish common religion becomes secondary in its impact on the identity process and belonging, and colour becomes the dominant criteria of self-identification that separates from here and removes them “outside” of Israeli society, while connecting them to other alternatives (imagined or real).

Their love and attachment for the music is an internal, emotional and powerful experience, and a state of being which spurs them on. This is the trigger around which the social scenes are organized and crystallized, with all their overwhelming meaning and expressions. Ethiopian adolescents are at a bustling crossroads and the forces weighing down on them are enormous.

The future scenarios that develop from this reality of their identification with the genres of black music may create a minority conscience that may develop hostility whether active or passive.

There is a serious increase in the crime rate among Ethiopian adolescents and in the gravity of the crimes, and lower age of adolescent offenders; these facts might be one of the indicators of possible trends.

Intervention at this junction, in ways that might reduce the negative impacts which distance and alienate the Ethiopian adolescents from identifying and belonging to Israeli society might help to decrease the undesirable direction that they might be taking. Both in this generation and the next ones as well, we might be able to bring them back home, to their families, to their community, and to Israeli society to which they desired so much to belong, before their immigration dream actually came true.

Studying the musical genres and the dialogue Ethiopian adolescents carry with them offers better and deeper understanding of the place of these adolescents, their actual socio-cultural spaces, their conscience and its translation into behaviours and actions. I still have a long way to go analysing the data I have collected. In this brief presentation, I could only share with you the initial avenues that have been opened up, and the great potential I found in studying identity issues among adolescents through music.

## Perception of Natural Hazards: The Case for a Symmetrical Anthropology

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### Abstract

*An analysis of perceptions of natural hazards shows that local people incorporate elements of their social, political and cultural life in categories, which also describe physical aspects. An interpretation of local people's perceptions of the Mount Cameroon eruption of March 1999 as well as local narratives about volcanic lake activity in the North West Province of Cameroon show a collapse in the nature culture/society divide characteristic of modernist anthropology. This paper argues for a symmetrical anthropology that endorses neither the latter divide nor a fusion of social and natural categories but considers the attitudes the environment as culturally defined within a unique human experience.*

### Introduction

The recent eruption of Mount Cameroon (starting March 27, 1999 and running for two weeks) was both a physical event of immense importance to scientists. It was also a social event of dramatic proportions because it affected the lives of peoples living close to the mountain and called for widespread reaction from the national public. The same can be said of other natural hazards (floods, fires, earth quakes) that occur all over the earth. The most interesting aspect of this eruption from an anthropological perspective was the way Cameroonians perceived this eruption since this conditioned or affected ultimate reactions. Although this is not synonymous with saying what people know affects their behaviour, the categories of perception of the environment are largely responsible for the interaction between social communities and the latter. I intend to explore the social categories which were at play in reaction to the mountain's eruption and beyond that social categories of perception that are at play in the relationship between local peoples and their environments. This study is important for a number of reasons.



Firstly, it sheds light on the evolution of cultural forms in areas, which under the push of colonial experiences have been undergoing intense modernization. Secondly, it puts into focus the object of Anthropology, i.e. human experience in its diversity, in an era which is increasingly coming under the influence of the Cartesian mind in the name of globalization. The basic question is that of the value indigenous categories of perception in situations of catastrophic physical occurrences, which need operational knowledge. Lastly the study highlights the unity of the human experience as stressed by anthropological practice which has often sought to transcend the distinctions imposed by modernist logic.

I will start by examining the local interpretations that were given to the mountain eruption. I will next look at other past or contemporary perceptions of other natural hazards. This will lead to a social categorization of perceptions of natural occurrences and a discussion on the relevance of this framework for a cognitive Anthropology of the environment. By cognitive Anthropology, I meant “the study of the relation between human society and human thought... [i.e.] How people in social groups conceive and think about the objects and events which make up their world ...” (D’Andrade 1995:1). In this regard I am following the lead of Latour’s (1991: 100-103) symmetrical anthropology to argue that there is a unity of human experience which dictates that one should believe neither in the “radical distinction between humans and non- humans... nor in the total overlap of knowledge and society.” One should rather consider human experience as building (or rather constructing) communities of “natures and societies”.

## **I. The Mount Cameroon Eruption: Perceptions and Reactions**

The eruption was a dramatic experience to most inhabitants of the lower eastern and southern slopes. It sent many people packing out of their homes for safe havens; others saw their homes disrupted; plantations got destroyed; all this ending in the threat of the village of Bakingili facing extinction from the map. It attracted both national and international attention, as the threat of a disaster was becoming more real as the days passed. The press carried out reports which either expressed local belief systems or grafted this into second political concerns.

### **The Modernist Press**

Dr. Kai Schmidt-Soltau, a columnist with *The Post* (N° 115 of Monday April 15 1999) recounted the coincidences between the eruptions of Mt Fako (Cameroon) and political changes in Cameroon. The 1922 eruption was

occurring during an important year as this coincided in the League of Nations' partition of the former German Kamerun. Schmidt-Soltau holds that "The Mountain erupted in anger, but Europeans never did have sensitive ears and they did not ask Efasa Moto [the mountain god]. It is obvious that the lava was an illustration of the unwanted separation". He associates the 1954 eruption with the triumph of conservative political forces over progressive UPC forces fighting for the independence of Cameroon, the 1959 eruption with independence, and the 1982 eruption with Ahidjo's transfer of power. He then concludes that "it is now [incumbent] on the new "old" man [famous allusion to new wine in old wine steins that characterized an internal debate within the CPOM party] to prove if he is still a real politician: an extinguisher or just another promiser."

Nicoline Pwaw echoes this opinion in the same edition of the paper when she concludes that "if past logic is anything" to go by then one should expect identical changes. *The Posts' vox pop* quotes Gabriel Njimini, a 75 years old Bakweri man as linking past eruptions to local events. He feels that the 1959 eruption was caused by the anger of the Mountain god because of the fact that power had changed hands from an indigene (Dr. E. M. L Endeley) to a non-native (Dr. John Ngu Foncha). He also attributes the 1982 eruption to the death of the local paramount chief, Endeley. As for the 1999 eruption this is either due to the death of one of the local chiefs, Monono, whose remains were desecrated or the failure to respect traditions, a fact which angered the mountain god, *Efasa Moto*.

Bate Besong, one of Cameroon's leading playwrights, in an article in *The Post* (N°116) tries to confront each eruption with its epoch. In this regard he treats this "ultimate phenomenon as *an essential and characteristic metaphor of a nation's fictional homecoming*: it's *Weltanschauung*, its affirmation". He warns against ignoring the danger of ignoring the ability of the "Mountain [to use] its magic to turn the world upside down. To deny or minimize these prophetic signatures is to take away much of its Promethean essentiality and deprive it of its Olympian halo."

### **Local Interpretations**

The foregoing motivated me to explore the social categories of perception and reactions. It was my belief that this could give one with a clue to interpretations of the environment in general. A rapid ethnographic approach was used. I collected data on a sample of thirty-seven informants with the use of a loosely structured questionnaire in the Buea area. The sample was composed of both indigenes and non-indigenes. Most non-indigenes had experienced this eruption for the first time and had practically no

interpretations to offer. To them this was just one of the unknowns of the natural world which was beyond human understanding. Some of them had only known of eruptions through the audio-visual media.

Most of the indigenes, Bakweri, had either heard of earlier Mountain eruptions or had experienced them (for those who were older.) One elderly person described the 1959 eruption in the following terms:

*It was very serious. It came down right to the Ekona Mbenge area where it halted. The light produced by the eruption was like electricity and shone all over the area. Ashes were produced as flames flew above housetops.*

Some informants reported that the effect of the 1982 eruption was felt in Ekona, Bakingili and Kumba.

The following causes were advanced by some indigenes:

One of the spirits that inhabit the world either in the sea or the bush. In this case the mountain spirit was angry. A born again Christian said: "These are traditional beliefs that there are gods in the mountain. When there is an eruption, they need scarifies. I am happy that Jesus sacrificed all the sacrifices that I need." Another informant explained that Epasa Moto who presides over the mountain might get angry or annoyed and cause the mountain to erupt. If the mountain is over exploited the gods become angry and provoke the eruption. Strangers making unauthorized sacrifices on the mountain. They also took part in the mountain race. All these provoke the anger of the ancestors who cause the eruption. Explosion of rocks: fire eats the soil making the earth to tremble. Minerals cause an eruption when overheated. One informant held that scientists explained this by the accumulation of oil in the mountain. The chief of Likoko Mimbea gave explanations that combined some pseudo-scientific explanations and local cosmologies. He made allusions to the annoyance of Epasa Moto, errors of strangers who exploit the forest at random and perform sacrifices they are not supposed to and the action of minerals. To buttress the latter point he cited sharp stones in the area where there was lava flow.

Reactions ranged from fear, helplessness, escape and fatalism to indigenous ways of coping. The latter consists of chiefs making intercessory prayers with the ancestor or mountain gods. According to our informants the paramount chief usually calls on the other chiefs and elders so that they all move to the mountain and perform sacrifices at the point where lava has halted. During the 1982 eruption there were as many as fourteen priests performing rituals. These priests constituted themselves into a secret society and used domestic animals such as goats, pigs and fowls as elements of

sacrifices.<sup>20</sup> According to the chief of Likoko Mimbea the sacrifices slowed down the eruption or at least its “noise”.

Contrary to the politically minded press reports, most of the informants did not see a symbolic relation between the present eruption and past ones. Most informants only highlighted the similarity in causes or differences in intensity. They felt that the present eruption was more intense than the 1959 and 1982 eruptions. Most respondents were of the opinion that it could likely occur while some of them predicting intervals of five, thirteen or ten years. The caution expressed by some was that it could only occur if strangers continued to make sacrifices on the mountain. The born-again informant, while indicating that he was not in a position to predict, however hoped that “such things do not happen to eliminate justified feelings that there are gods resting up there”. Another informant thought this could happen again around human settlements.

## II. Hazards in Other Cameroonian Oral Traditions

This brings us face to face with the question of perceptions of natural catastrophes in local cultures. Both contemporary and past reports point to interpretations of natural catastrophes in terms of local social categories.

Rowlands and Warnier (in Nyamnjoh 1997:95) report that on August 16, 1984, Monoun, a volcanic lake in the Foubot area released a toxic gas that asphyxiated thirty-seven people, including a Catholic priest and many animals<sup>21</sup>. It was interpreted by public rumour as attempts by former President Ahidjo (a Muslim) to regain his position against President Biya (a Catholic) through a demonstration of the superiority of occult powers in the region of his erstwhile enemies, the Bamileke. On August 21, 1986, Lake Nyos released a lethal gas that killed more than 1500 (according to official reports) and several million animals. It was rumoured, and is still is, that president Biya and the government had allowed the Israelis’ to carry out secret nuclear tests in the region against a fee of 14 billion CFA francs. This was the more so as this coincided with the establishment of diplomatic relations between Cameroon and Israel. This catastrophe was also woven into other events, (such as the scare around ATT Vaccination (Ndumbe and Yenshu 1992) to insinuate that this was an attempt by the central government to stealthily curb the population of the North West province known to be politically hostile.

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<sup>20</sup>It is rumored that albino virgins were used in the past. Our study does not confirm this.

<sup>21</sup>An explosion has been reported of recent without corresponding interpretations of the same type

### III. Examples from History and Local Practices

I will like to refer to the deluge story of the Kedjom, which is situated several centuries ago in the vicinity of Lake Oku. I will explore other instances and practices reported in the literature (Chilver 1991). This will enable us to attempt to establish the link between collective categories of perception and natural catastrophes.

I have chosen to present a version of the Kedjom deluge story I collected in 1989 in Kedjom Keku and then compare it with the versions of Eugenia Shanklin (1992) and E.M. Chilver (1991). The story runs thus:

*Agbo became Fon while in Oku where they were living in contiguous territory with the Kedjom. Both parties had left some adjoining piece of land at the meeting point of their settlement. Soon a man with overgrown hair visited them and asked for land to settle on. The people were astonished that a single individual could be making such a request. They answered him by saying that if they were three in number his wish could have been granted. The stranger then went over to Oku where the Fan of Oku had his hair shaved. He was offered food: huckleberry and foofoo corn. He had been entertained with a cock at Kedjom. The man then ate and went and settled on the free zone. He spent two days in building his hut. In the evening he went up to the settlement on the other side and began to inform the people that if in the evening they felt wind blowing and saw signs of rain in the sky they should not go out of their houses. Houses should be closed. He informed both the Oku and Kedjom people. This stranger's instructions were followed strictly. It rained and winds blew throughout the night. In the morning the people woke up to discover a lake had formed on the piece of land. The Fan of Kedjom and Oku each began to claim ownership of the lake. This continued for two days. The Fon of Oku then suggested that it was not good to continue to struggle over the lake. Rather they could go into it and on coming out they would know who was the owner.*

*The population of Oku and Kedjom then turned out en masse on the day the Fans were going into the lake. After three days the people gathered again around the lake. Suddenly the Fan of Oku came out. The Fan of Kedjom never came out again. After a period of three days his funeral rites were performed and his brother Angwuh succeeded him. Angwuh is the one who settled at Kuwee. Nkim, the brother of Agbo who was lost in the lake, then decided to look for a suitable site ahead to settle in. He went down to Ntabuwe where the Bafut court used to be situated. Nkim was later to become the Fan in Bafut. Finge (Tifon or the co-adjutant for Ajohye) then left and went to Njinikom where he settled.*

Another version collected by Shanklin (1992: 59) would rather point to natural occurrences subsumed in oral tales and legends. The version runs thus:

*At Oku there is a good size crater lake (6°12'N 10 ° 28'E) and Oku people say that at one time two groups were settled beside the lake. On the western slope were the Babanki or Kijem people and on the eastern slope were the Oku people. Each had their Fan. There were many disputes between, one being a disagreement as to which group owned Lake Oku. One day a stranger came and asked the Fan of Kijem for land on which to build a compound. The Kijem Fan was a disagreeable fellow and he refused to give land. The stranger then went to the Oku Fan, who gave him a building plot. But the stranger did not like the land that was given, so he went back to the Oku and asked for a different plot. The Fan allocated him another, but again the stranger was not happy, so returned to the Fan, asking for a different plot. The Fan allocated him another, but again the stranger was not happy, so returned to the Fan, asking for a different place. Once again, he was given a plot, and once again, he returned to complain about it. Finally the Oku Fan, seeing that the man would not be satisfied, told him to choose his own land. The man settled down besides Lake Oku, and as it is said in Pidgin English, no one over knew what he did there. (The implication is that the man had no visitors because he was a witch.)*

*When the stranger died Kijem and Oku people went to celebrate his death, the Kijem people on their side of the Lake and Oku on theirs. Both Fans were called into the Lake (presumably by the now dead stranger) and they did so, each entering from his own side. They were then taken to the lake bottom and soon after they disappeared, streaks of red (blood) began to appear on the Oku side.*

*As they watched the red streaks come up, the Oku people thought their Fan was dead and they began to mourn for him. At the same time, there appeared in the distance a Fan dressed in fine new cloths, and the Kijem people began to cheer, believing their Fan was being returned to them, having been honoured by the host with precious garments.*

*But, in fact, it was the Oku Fan who was dressed in fine clothes and the Kijem Fan who had been slaughtered. The two groups returned to their homes, wondering what would come next. Soon after, the waters of Lake Oku left the lake bed and destroyed most of the homes and people on the Kijem side; the remnant moved away from the lake, further west into Belo Valley (6°10' N 10°21' E).*

#### **IV. Social Categories, Perceptions and Practices**

I will start this analysis by indicating that the categories of perception, whether indigenous/local or scientific, are essentially social in nature. In this

regard I would agree with Durkheim and Mauss ([1903] 1968 and 1969) that the group, which he considers primitive, projects its own categories to nature. Before looking at the implication of such an affirmation on the Anthropology of the environment I will first attempt an identification of the categories, which are essentially political, cultural (in the sense of a definition of person, the world and modes of action) and physical/natural. The following table illustrates the expression of these social categories in the discourses about natural hazards that are reported in the oral traditions both past and present.

**Social Categories of Discourse and Relation to Natural Hazards**

| Category of o<br>Discourse | Theme of Discourse                                                                                   |                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            | Discourses about<br>eruption of Mt.<br>Cameroon                                                      | Discourses about<br>explosions of Lake<br>Nvos and Monoun                                   | Discourses about earlier volcanic<br>lake activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Political                  | Association of earlier<br>eruptions with<br>political facts                                          | Association of<br>explosions with<br>contemporary<br>political facts                        | Grafting of volcanic activity of<br>lakes<br>to inter-tribal conflict and conflicts<br>over environmentally strategic<br>space                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Cultural                   | Attribution of eruption<br>to death of chiefs,<br>anger of mountain<br>god, spirits or<br>ancestors. | Attribution of lake<br>Nyos gas explosion<br>to failure of natives<br>to<br>make sacrifices | Association of lake activity to<br>retributive action of nature spirits<br>and gods. Recurrent themes<br>according to Chilver (1991 :20) are<br>spirit doubles, which activate<br>transforms/zombies and<br>association<br>of numinous powers with waters,<br>sometimes benevolent, sometimes<br>wayward or punitive, |



|                      |                                                                                            |                                                                          |                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Physical/<br>Natural | Attribution of volcanic<br>action of mountain to<br>minerals, petroleum<br>or molten rocks | Gas explosions with<br>a lethal effect on a<br>large number of<br>people | Narrative about physical activity<br>(torrential rain, floods which kill<br>people, landslides, lethal lake<br>activity) |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

One can then examine these categories and the catastrophes separately. Starting with the recent mountain eruption the political categories are concentrated either around national events (partition of national territory, political transitions during independence period or later) or local events (Endeley's loss of elections to Foncha). The cultural categories concentrate on the action of gods, nature spirits and mountain. However a new disruptive element is introduced. This is the stranger<sup>22</sup> who makes unauthorised visits to or sacrifices on the mountain. The blame is also on the exploitation of the environment around the mountain. Physical explanations of a pseudo-scientific nature are also presented. The action here is the performance of rituals and sacrifices to the spirits, gods or ancestors in order to appease them or atone for faults.

If one turns to the Kedjom deluge story, Shanklin informs us that the Oku people still make elaborate sacrifices to the lake, which showed by its action that it belonged to the Oku people. From that day to this, no red streaks have appeared in the Lake. Before making some comments I may say that she simply analyses this story from the point of view of population movements/dynamics when she indicates that such stories 'explain' the present Grassfields settlements patterns and ethnic grouping. According to her they point to maleficent water, water that misbehaves in a spectacular way and sets in motion the migration of ethnic groups (ibid. p. 62).

This modest analysis by Shanklin is however oblivious of the cosmologies and worldviews, which underlie the themes and it is only an understanding of this background that could enlighten our interpretations of the various versions of the story. These worldviews fashion the relationship of peoples to their environments and other groups with which they struggle over the control of the latter. The first point about cosmologies is the animation of physical occurrences. According to Grassfields cosmology physical features (streams, mountains, pools, lakes, winds, rainfall, landslides) could be the abode of spirits which could either be maleficent or beneficent. Such spirits could

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<sup>22</sup>There has been widespread animosity between local inhabitants of the coastal area and non-natives within a background of political tension. (cf. Yenshu 1997).



interact with the human world and even preside over the destinies of groups (clans, ethnic groups, and nations). They are therefore venerated worshiped or avoided. In their interaction they can take on human form but do not discuss with the latter in human language. Neither do humans interact with them in human form. The language of human-spirit interaction is therefore symbolic: humans have to resort to signs and symbols to solicit certain reactions from the nature spirits that are interpreted in symbolic language.

Competition over some geographical features and natural resources (forests, lakes with fish, rivers, mountains) may then take symbolic appeals to spirits said to reside in the features. I stress the idea of symbolism because as Warnier (1995: 258) has shown, the concept of violence leading to bloodshed was alien to Grassfields mentality before the Chamba and Fulani raids. I would postulate that the events around the lake were more of a symbolic competition over the lake. It might have been that just after the Oku won this symbolic contest that a disaster of the Nyos lake type occurred, leading to deaths (cf. Chilver 1991; Shanklin op.cit.) Red streaks such as the ones observed during the Nyos explosion, which were described as “red as blood” (Tikum Mbah Azonga 1996: 1812 - 1814), could have easily been described as a death. It would be in this light that the catastrophe was interpreted as being a rejection of the Kedjom people by the lake god, an indication that the place was not good for habitation. About the likelihood of a natural hazard, Freeth (1992: 54) notes that Lake Oku is only 52 meters deep, but it has a large surface area and a volume of about 2270 million cubic meters. If charged with carbon dioxide it could contain more than three times as much as Lake Monoun could<sup>23</sup>.

I would say that based on the selective destruction or havoc that the lake caused the Oku might just be grateful to have been spared and therefore honour the lake. This may explain Kedjom aversions for watery lakes and the preference for the Mbi dry crater (where sacrifices used to be performed) which offered them shelter later. In this regard people move away from destructive natural forces to ones which offer protection and shelter.

It also appears to be linked to the preferential “behaviour” of the lake and consequently the transfer of power by the Ntui to the Oku. Worthy of note too are versions collected by Mrs Chilver (1991) and myself from Nso and Oku informants. Mrs. Chilver’s version carries with it the retribution-by-natural-disaster motive but does not mention the idea of Fons entering the lake. What is significant too is that it is contrasted with an earlier version

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<sup>23</sup>Lake Monoun exploded in August 1984 killing 37 people. Lake Nyos released toxic aerosol of water and carbon dioxide that killed more than 1250 people. If I compare the two incidents the Kedjom disaster must have caused more casualties

collected by Father Emonts that mentions 8abungo as competing with Oku over the ownership of the lake. Here this is a sacrifice of the Cain-and-Abel, type where Oku is given possession of the lake when its sacrifices are found to be more acceptable. The Babungo chief dies in the competition but not in the lake.

In another version I collected from an Oku informant two Fons (Kedjom and Oku) sacrifice goats at the lake and enter the lake from different sides. Here the lake spirit takes the Fon of Kedjom Keku and kills by the Oku side. Soon, only the goats come out. The Oku Fon comes out adorned with a different cap. All Kedjom then leave Oku. This version bears striking similarity to Emonts' version, which point to competition by sacrifice. Here the loser does not only loss but also dies, which is an ill omen. These versions seem to corroborate our view that legends combine real events (competition, sacrifice, natural disaster, death of kings) and supernatural interpretations (the retributive action of nature spirits, the power of victorious kings). This will evidently point to the competition power water points that are both troublesome and the source of blessings. The symbolic meaning attached to this competition is justified by the fact that present versions of Oku history tend to suppress this version of facts in preference for a conquest history which pits the Oku and the Ntui (Bah 1995; Nforme n. d. 7-11). Another version by Shufai Jem Bamfem of Nso present the Kedjom Fon as not dying but escaping miraculously with the use of natural powers to form a new prosperous kingdom. This version bears striking similarities to resurrection themes.

Stories of chiefs competing by visiting the bottom of the lake to speak to a god or gods have also been evidently grafted to the story telling traditions of the area. This one bears very close similarities to the Ye-eng and Naa story as narrated by C. Wola in Lantum (1964:116-122). Here two girls visit a lake to fetch tadpoles and crabs. Yeng, who catches crabs, pushes Naa into the lake in order to collect the latter's catch. The source of Naa's disappearance becomes a mystery. Naa who is captured by the lake spirit reveals her presence by singing to a man fetching wood. The latter then informs the parents. A diviner advises those relatives to move to the lakeside, weep into a piece of clay pot, throw the tears into the lake and jump into it to show one's innocence. This is done and all innocent people come out of the lake. Only the wicked friend sinks into the lake while Ye-eng is saved. She appears adorned with jewels. On return home the lake streams after the people and it is only after they strip Yeng of all her jewels that it abates. Evidently all the thematic and structural elements of the narratives are reflected in the Kedjom - Oku conflicts: retribution, the agency of physical features and the proof of innocence by

entering a lake. From the structural point of view, the literary butts are two competing persons or two diametrically opposed moral characters, pitted against each other, while the terrain for action is the lake which is imbued with both physical and metaphysical powers.

Mrs. Chilver (op. cit. 17-20) reports sacrifices at Lakesides at Awing and the Mbi dry crater (Kedjom Keku), lake activity which leads to migration and the evidence of earth quakes in Western Grassfields history. In attempting to answer the question whether oral traditions deal with earlier lake disaster in the North West Province, she suggests that “the translocation of lakes is such an unexpected phenomenon that its appearance in Grassfields folklore may be the best evidence it can provide for past volcanic activity.”

The conclusion one can arrive at here is that natural catastrophes are not always lived as natural occurrences but are grafted unto prevailing social categories. Durkheim and Mauss (op.cit: 223-224) hold that just in the same manner as science, social categories of perception are of a speculative nature. They are not meant to facilitate action but to ease understanding or make intelligible the relationship between things.

*Etant donnée certains concepts considérés comme fondamentaux, l'esprit éprouve le besoins d'y rattacher les notions qu'il fait des choses. De telles classifications sont donc, avant tout, dessinées à relier les idées entre el/es, unifier la connaissance; à ce titre, on peut dire sans inexactitude qu'elles sont œuvre de science et constituent une première philosophie de la nature. (Durkheim and Mauss ibid: 224)*

In the present scheme of things therefore one could consider the scientific interpretations of the mountain eruption just one of the various interpretations that are possible. One can also situate them within the utilitarian conceptions of the environment, which can be contrasted with non-western, non-Cartesian categories. The specific type of relations societies entertain with their environments could determine this. One could make a distinction between Western utilitarian conceptions of the environment, which are situated within a background of science and technology and non-western anthropomorphic views which give life to objects, therefore presenting natural occurrences as a result of spiritual or human-like agency. While science and the need to exploit the environment and therefore instil a dominating attitude towards nature largely govern Western cosmologies, non-western views present humans as the victims at the mercy of an overwhelming Nature. Such a Nature may simply be the object of veneration or appeasement as is the case of Nature spirits said to reside in gigantic features. This may underlie the presentation of religious sites as elevated and the conception of sacred geographical sites that one finds in

the so-called great or revealed religions. A tendency towards veneration would therefore serve to preserve the environment because Nature is only partially considered as of use-value.

This is just the opposite of western utilitarian perspectives, enhanced by the economy of exploitation and conquest, which drives man towards the creative destruction of nature. In its congenital sin of a claim to an all-knowing status, this perspective forgets its own very limits as can be seen in the inability of science to predict with precision natural hazards. As such, one could therefore find paralleled interpretations of the eruption dictated by the prevailing social categories en vogue, local indigenous people would attribute the eruption of the mountain either to Epasa Moto, to the death of a chief, or an impending event while politically minded persons will easily see coincidences between eruptions and political events, without this having any relation to scientific interpretations. One can also question why these local perceptions still abound in an age of science. This is principally because of the difficulty in getting access to science in an equally economic age. One has to go through a rigorous schooling process to be acquainted with certain notions, even then, most educated were not aware of what was actually happening. Moreover, African people still stick to their own traditional worldviews, which largely govern their lives. This would explain the local chiefs' sacrifices to the mountain god as well as interpretation of the recent occurrences in terms of prevailing social categories of perception.

Beyond these distinctions and dichotomies one notices the collapse of the nature-culture divide that is so dear to the Western mind. In this context nature is considered as part of the social world or one can say nature is acculturated i.e. the environment is part of the cultural and not the economic world. Bruno Latour (1991: 103) has made a case for a symmetrical anthropology, which should cease from seeing the world with specifically modern eyes. In short an anthropology wherein "Premoderns are like us [the Westerners]", which offers a better analysis of the Westerners than the modernist anthropology offered of the premoderns. The argument is that both Westerns and premoderns have built communities of natures and societies." As such the same approach, in which the anthropologist captures the wide array of social perceptions of the environment, applies to all societies.

*"To become symmetrical, anthropology needs a complete overhaul and intellectual retooling so that it can get [stop] believing neither in the radical distinction between humans and non-humans at home, nor in the total overlap of knowledge and society, elsewhere"(Latour ibid: 101 ).*

This is the task ahead.

## Conclusions

I have examined some social categories of perception that characterize local people's representations of some natural catastrophes and hazards. I have shown that this is a combination of political, cultural and physical/natural categories and that this tends to collapse the distinction between nature and society as the various categories are interwoven. As a preliminary exercise in what Bruno Latour (ibid) has called a symmetrical anthropology I have sought to represent the local person's experience of natural phenomena in a holistic manner i.e. one where nature and culture/society become a single existential experience. This can be applicable in all contexts where natural catastrophes occur. The local person's reaction would not only be subsumed to the quest for survival but will go beyond that to embrace political, ontological and social questions. In other words it is not a specifically African or non-modern question. For instance, a natural catastrophe like the one recently reported in Turkey would bring into play these categories even if in a different manner. A holistic anthropological approach, which goes beyond Cartesian categories of analysis, would therefore be more useful in this regard. In short this is a call for an anthropology which is the *logic* of human existence in opposition to a study of human existence according to the modern vision.

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## **Socio-cultural Determinants of the Status of the Cameroonian Woman: Implications for the Family in the 21st Century**

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### **Introduction**

The issues discussed in this paper are familiar topics in development, anthropological and sociological literature. As far back as the 1970s, development agencies started to show increasing concern for the role women play in development. The Women in Development (WID) concept demonstrated this concern. The African Region of the World Bank completed WID Assessment/Gender Papers in 20 countries since the launching of the Con able Initiative on Gender Issues in Development in 1989 (Blackden, 1993). The gender dimension of economic adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) has also been recently addressed by Kajubi (1991), with the conclusion that the structural presence of women in economic production is largely invisible and overlooked in earlier paradigms of development.

Later, men began to attack directly or indirectly for reverse discrimination in the use of the concept of “Women in Development”, and asked loudly, “What about Men in Development?” The concept changed to Gender and Development (GAD). Therefore, the contents of this paper which has to do with Gender Issues in Development (GID)) is old wine in new bottles. Is there anything new we can add to the on-going discussion? Let us see.

The problems presented by gender to development are just as complex and as old as the problems posed by development to gender. The two variables present fertile ground for causal analysis and modelling, and lead us on the same path as the chicken and egg question. Which came first, the chicken or the egg? What is the problem, gender or development?

### **Organization of the Paper**

This paper is presented in three parts. Part 1 presents the diagnosis of the sub-theme. I will attempt to sketch a picture of the Cameroonian woman within the broader picture of womankind and human societies. This diagnosis



is an attempt to give a snap shot of the situation as it is, and to provide the background for debate, critical thinking and reflection on the problems of our time.

Part 2 examines attempts at gender-responsive development in Cameroon. This section entertains a critical examination of the forces that conspire to create the current status of women in the Cameroonian society, and the interrelationships between these forces. It goes on to briefly posit what, in my mind's eye, are some of the strategies we might adopt to improve imbalances and incongruences in, or impediments to cohesion between the variables of gender and development.

Some empirical explanations for the present status of the Cameroonian women, as well as the conclusions inspired by the analyses are presented in part 3.

**Part 1: Diagnosis**

Approximately 51 % of the Cameroonian population is female. Although the total adult literacy rate in Cameroon in 1990 was 46%, the female literacy rate stood at 57% (World Development Report, 1995). Central government expenditures on education increased from 12.4% in 1980 to 18.0% in 1993. But government expenditure on health, housing and economic services dropped sharply between 1980 and 1993, as shown on table 1.

**Table 1: Central Government Expenditures on selected social services (1980 and 1993)**

**Table 1: Central Government Expenditures on selected social services (1980 and 1993)**

|      | Education | Health | Housing | Econ. Service | Overall + or |
|------|-----------|--------|---------|---------------|--------------|
| 1980 | 12.4%     | 5.1%   | 8.0%    | 24.0%         | 0.5%         |
| 1993 | 18.0%     | 4.8    | 2.8     | 10.2          | 2.0          |

Source, World Development Report, 1995:180

In the area of health and nutrition there was only one doctor to 12,000 Cameroonians in 1993. And while 77% of the Cameroonian female population attended primary school in 1970, only 4% were enrolled in secondary school in the same period. This trend improved somewhat in 1990 with 93% of the female school-age population enrolled in primary schools and 23% in secondary schools.

Gender comparisons on life expectancy at birth show Cameroonian men living longer than women: 46 compared to 43 years in 1970. This trend was reversed in 1993 with women having a higher life expectancy (58 years) than

men (55 years). Gender comparisons in education show that for every 100 males, 74 females enrolled in primary school and only 36 females for 100 males enrolled in secondary school for the same period.

The figures improved in 1993 with a ratio of 85: 1 00 in primary school and 71: 1 00 in secondary school. With regard to female share of the labour force, 37% of Cameroon's labour forces in 1970 were women. This figure dropped to 33% in 1993 (World Development Report, 1995).

Overall, the condition of the Cameroonian woman has improved significantly over the last 25 years, using key sectoral indicators of health and education alone as parameters of measurement. But such macro indicators are grossly misleading, in view of the fact that the data are largely based on urban populations.

With approximately 65% of Cameroon's population living in rural areas, people who spend the better part of their professional lives living, working with and observing rural communities will testify that the status of the rural woman has not known significant improvement over the last 20 years. On the contrary, things have gone even worse within the last ten years (Nji, 1994).

The present status of the Cameroonian rural woman is characterized by poverty. "The incidence of poverty falls more on women than on men. Customs, traditions and divergent cultural values are seen to be determining factors in the perpetuation of women in the poverty strata. Gender dimensions of poverty are more prevalent in the Far North and Eastern Provinces where tradition and social values are seen to greatly accelerate the pace of early marriages and widen the literacy and opportunity structure between men and women", (Nji, 1994:4).

Evidence from a brief (unpublished) survey of farmers in the South of Bafou village in the West Province (Nji, 1987), showed that women work 15 hours a day compared to only 7 for men. This pattern may be found in most parts of Cameroon, particularly as it is generally recognized that women constitute between 80 and 90% of the labour force in Cameroon's agriculture.

Work and health directly impact on each other. A healthy economy is more productive than a sickly one. And higher productivity produces positive efforts on the health and health care system. Unfortunately, the Cameroon government's public expenditures on the health care system have declined from 5.1 % in 1970 to 4.8% (in 1993 World Bank World Development Report, 1995: 180).

Survival prospects in Cameroon are also discouraging: life expectancy is estimated at 56 years. Mortality of children under 5 years (per thousand) was 102 between 1995-96. Meanwhile, in 1997, Adult HIVI zero prevalence per 100 adults was estimated at 4.9 (World Bank, 1998:330).

The major losers of this negative change are women and children. For example, of the estimated 52 % of the Cameroon population aged 15 years of age and above that were illiterate in 1985, 64% were female. This dropped slightly to 57% in 1990 and 48% in 1995. Meanwhile, the male illiterate population 15 years of age and above was 39% in 1985, 34% in 1990, and 25% in 1995 (World Bank, 1998:337).

### **The Plight of Women World-wide**

Gender issues in development in the Cameroon context form part of a seamless web of traps and torments for women everywhere. In spite of the general recognition that the world's women work hard, they still swell the ranks of the working poor. They work more and account for an overwhelming majority (70%) of people living in poverty. In 1994, the female/male ratio of participation in economic activity in Cameroon was estimated at 46%.

Meanwhile, in 1990, it was estimated that 11 % of the administrative and managerial staff in Cameroon were female; 32% in professional and technical occupations and 59% in clerical and sales (World Bank, 1998:345). These data show that women tend to predominate in less lucrative occupations, with lesser opportunities than men.

### **Rational for considering Gender Issues in Development**

Past paradigms of development since the 1960s have persistently stressed the relevance of "Economic Man" complemented by "Social Man". The role of women as part of this paradigm has been largely ignored at worst, or underestimated at best. Whereas both men and women participate in, and are affected by the economic, social, political and cultural lives of their societies, policy-makers and economists did not seem to have given women appropriate recognition.

What was largely ignored is the fact that the contribution of women and men come in different ways, because men and women play different but complementary roles in society. Both also face different impediments in the exercise of their roles, and respond to these constraints differently.

"Gender" is the term used to describe the social differential that exists between men and women. These differences arise from fundamental discrepancies in the rights and obligations of men and women as guaranteed and protected by divergent value systems which are imbedded in various cultures and sub-cultures. These divergences can be seen in differential behaviours characterized by access to, control and use of resources due to the inherent biological differences that exist between men and women.

**Gender roles:** Although both men and women play multiple roles (e.g. productive, reproductive, and community management), men generally tend to play single productive roles, and they play their multiple roles sequentially. On the other hand, women tend to play these roles simultaneously and balance simultaneous competing claims on limited time for each of them (Blackden and Morris Hughes, 1993:2).

For instance, a woman may be breastfeeding while at the same time preparing supper. Or take the most common and least recognized situation where a pregnant woman goes around daily performing several multiple tasks throughout the period of her pregnancy.

**Gender Needs:** Since men and women play different roles, they must also have different gender needs. These are of two kinds: practical and strategic. “Practical gender needs are those needs of women and men connected with their existing roles in society. Meeting these needs requires addressing inadequacies in the living conditions of women and men.

**Strategic gender needs** are concerned about changing men’s and women’s roles in society. Through effective policies, such changes can improve the status of women and men alike in society, without jeopardizing the rights and obligations of others (Blackden and Morris Hughes, 1993).

Changes geared at meeting these needs through policies are expected to improve the status of women in particular by providing equity, equal opportunity, removing biases and barriers to self-actualization against women. These biases are socially bestowed too often by the cultural subordination of women to men.

Areas of bias include discriminatory practices in the distribution of labour and sharing of outputs, and the granting of access to various statuses and rights. Unless these obstacles are removed, the current crisis in the Cameroonian (African) family will not improve. It will worsen.

Past attempts to address the gender issue in development have been oriented toward welfare, approaches on equity, poverty alleviation strategies, efficiency and empowerment, income generation and employment-creation strategies for women. All these efforts have been geared to make development initiatives more responsive to gender issues. Unfortunate long-standing prejudices, age-old stereotypes and culture bound biases obfuscate effective development initiatives aimed at improving the status of the African woman.

## **Part 2: The Outcome of Gender-responsive Development in Cameroon**

Some efforts have been made in response to international prescriptions on gender issues in development in Cameroon. The myriad of development

projects that were created in Cameroon between the 1970s and 80s indirectly addressed development biases. Most of the integrated rural development projects did not purposefully address the macro level issues of gender in development.

The reasons for this tendency are not entirely obscure. Economists have defined the economy principally in terms of goods and services with strong recognition of the role of subsistence agriculture in national development. But the work of caring for children, gathering fuel and water, processing food, preparing meals, keeping the house, nursing the sick and elderly were excluded from economic calculations, because these “social activities” are culturally considered “women’s work”.

By excluding activities of this nature in macro-economic analysis, policy-makers indirectly created a bias in the allocation of resources to the detriment of women. Thus, for cultural reasons and the lopsided nature of earlier economic policies, gender was not an issue in Cameroon’s Development Policy. As Chilver (1938) notes, the economic position of women in Bamenda has perpetually been characterized by persistent gender-specific division of labour and responsibilities, and the domination of male authorities has led often to militant demonstrations by women.

In spite of such reactions by women, development literature makes little mention of women cultivators, during a period in which technology transfer and macro-economic “grand theory” was directed considerably to agro-industrial schemes, peasant colonization or resettlement projects, as well as livestock production for the benefit of urban centres. The author further notes that “there is little evidence that Intra-household allocation of tasks affected the design of agriculture development projects”.

. However, with the creation of the North West Development Authority (better known under the French acronym MIDENO) in 1981, some observable departures from the past began to occur in favour of women cultivators. Fertilizers, improved seeds and technical advice became available to women in the Province. Yet, “older attitudes of non-consultation with women cultivators persists whenever animal keeping, unquestionably a male preserve in both local and western perceptions, is involved”, Chilver, (1988).

### **The Present Status of the Cameroonian woman in Development**

It will be pretentious for me to claim to be able to present a full view of the present status of the Cameroonian woman. The brief descriptions that follow are in broad strokes. The diversity of the Cameroonian society precludes an ambitious attempt at a generalized characterization of the status of the Cameroonian woman. To do so is to presume homogeneity in the

structure and functions of Cameroon's economic, social political and cultural life.

### **Main indicators or the present status of the Cameroonian Woman**

**1. Culture:** In all Cameroon's sub-cultures, women are considered subject to male authority. Male characteristics are considered central to the decision-making process at family, community and national levels. Cultural prescriptions that subject women to male authority include rules of inheritance, births and deaths, work, childcare, sex and reproduction, and a host of traditional rites, too many and varied, to list here.

The way these prescriptions are defined, interpreted and applied end up deepening an on-going crisis in the African family. A crisis caused by resource scarcity, erosion of traditional value systems and a decline in the authority of parents over their children.

**2. Socio-economic:** Whereas women represent the largest population segment of Cameroon's work force, their work is largely unrecognized and not considered in the national accounting system. Where Cameroonian women work outside the home, they tend to fill what is considered "traditional or feminine" roles (tailoring, childcare, waitressing). Cameroon's informal sector is predominantly female, with most of them working in the agricultural sector. Cameroon's peasant cultivators and retailers of food are generally women. Similarly, the "Home Economics" courses that are taught in primary, secondary and high schools are generally directed by and at women.

Although the Cameroon Labour Code decrees equal work for equal pay, wage discrepancies still exist. Cases prevail where female workers receive less pay for the same amount of work as their male counterpart. Cameroon public and private legal institutions, the Army and Public Administration are male-dominated. For example, of all the ten Governors and approximately sixty Senior Divisional Officers in the country, none of them is a woman.

Although women are achieving economic independence, the right to spend the money that some of them earn must still be vetoed by their husbands or male heads of households. As women acquire more economic power particularly through the production and sale of food crops, men are known to be increasingly dependent on women than formerly for contributions to household expenditure.

Yet the ambiguous situation of women as providers and partners reflects wide disparities in income, access to land, ability to mobilize male labour and capacity to acquire new technologies. These imbalances create disequilibrium in the Cameroonian family.



With the collapse of hitherto affluent cash crop economies based on export crops (e.g. coffee, cocoa, rubber, palm produce and cotton), women are increasingly taking over tasks previously performed by men. Decision-making in agriculture, health, education, entertainment and family welfare in Cameroon are increasingly failing under female influence within the last five years. This trend is likely to be accelerated by the stubborn wave of globalization.

For decades, life in the North West Province has been cankered by farmer–grazer conflicts (Chilver, 1988; Harshbarger and Nji, 1992; Harshbarger, 1995). The analyses show that the animal producers (grazers) are often male, and the food producers often female. When cattle damage fields, the painful onus of proof lies on the women who are predominantly illiterate, old and deprived of bargaining power vis-à-vis a corrupt and more powerful political elite that is all male. Under conditions of increasingly scarce resources (particularly land and income), women tend to lose out to men in the conflict and competition. “The system perpetuates discrimination against women who have less political, economic and social power than grazers” (Harshbarger and Nji, 1992: 165).

### **Women and Corruption**

Corruption in public and private life has not attracted enough attention in development circles, until recently with the emergence of Transparency International. Yet corruption is an indicator of where the shoe is pinching. Where such attention is paid on the development agenda, it tends to focus more on the State and State institutions as the predominant generative and barometric instruments and platforms for corruption and behaviour that are anti-theatrical to development (NGLS, 1992:42).

Often overlooked and under-reported are the socio-cultural foundations and correlates to such behaviours as well as the extent to which forces and interests in other spheres of the community (family, neighbourhoods, clans, religions, businesses, professions) contribute to, and support corruption in Cameroon and other societies.

In 1995, Cameroon won the prestigious 6th Prize of the 10th most Corrupt Countries in the World. Not surprisingly, Cameroon moved up from 6th position to Number One in 1998. The actors involved are men and women. The role women might have played in helping Cameroon win that “prize” may not be unconnected to their low social status and lack of access to resources which subjects them to pervasive corruptive forces.

An examination of admissions into Cameroon’s professional schools, recruitment into the public services, dispute settlement and access to power

(social, economic and political) and to various forms of social privileges in Cameroon are invariably smeared by the poison of corruption.

A scientific study of women in positions of power and the status of female students in Cameroonian schools is appalling. It reveals, beyond all reasonable doubt, the extent to which Cameroonian women have been used or allowed themselves to be used in the name of “survival” or as a logical confirmation of Charles Darwin’s social theory of “survival of the fittest” ... in Cameroon.

I posit, and posit here very strongly that any discussion of gender and development will be incomplete without some discussion on the role of corruption in development and how it in turn influences gender in development. As Aboyade (cited in NGIS, 1992:43) has stated “to pretend that corruption does not exist only worsens the problems of resource allocation. Understanding its character may lead to better and more rational planning”.

My own research experience in Cameroon illuminates this point further. For example, I found that agricultural extension agents often require poor women cultivators in a rural village to “prepare a chicken and keep a bottle of whisky” on the day the extension agents are to visit the farmers’ fields, (Nji, 1986, verbal communication to the author by farmers).

Also, housewives and university female students and graduates flirt with high government officials including (lecturers and administrative staff) to extract favours for their husbands, children, other relative or even themselves. These perverse behaviours betray the socio-cultural characteristics of a society in want of morality, equity and healthy gender-balance.

Part of the problem of corruption in Cameroon’s development lies in the culture and sub-cultures of the society. There seems to be a wide-spread, albeit erroneous, feeling among the leadership that the facts cannot be discovered. If proof is available, the victims cannot be punished.

As the victims themselves in a “victimless crime” say it, “you scratch my back, I scratch your own” or as some of them say, “ce qui n’est pas dit dans le texte n’est pas proscrit”; in the language of bribe-takers and bribe-givers, “nothing goes for nothing”.

I believe that corruption thrives in Cameroon for the following reasons:

- a. great inequality in the distribution of wealth and allocation of resources;
- b. manufactured poverty by the political leadership;
- c. prevalence of gender segregation in distributive and resource allocation relationships;
- d. political office is seen as the primary means for gaining rapid access to wealth and climbing out of the mud of poverty;



- e. the absence or weakness of social and governmental sanctions against corruption;
- f. the tacit condonement or approval and pursuit of illegal wealth by the political and economic elite;
- g. emphasis on clan, tribal, family, individual and other social relationships to the detriment of the common good;
- h. absence of a strong sense of nationalism across all the social strata of the Cameroon society;
- i. lack of political will to establish national virtues.

Can the Cameroonian (African) family survive such a cultural storm?

### **Education, the Cultural Meaning of Work and the Status of Women**

Work, as a cultural item, is an important phenomenon in virtually all human societies. Work is so fundamental to the life of human beings that we cannot understand the human condition unless we make some sense of the way human beings make their living (Hughes, 1951; Riesman, 1955).

Because work is vital for human survival, it is important to examine work in relation to the cultural meaning work has for different people, and the factors that make work available or unavailable to different people in different places. For instance, to the ancient Greeks, whose physical labour was done by slaves, work was a curse. For the Bamilekes of Cameroon, work is so crucial to the value system that wealth cannot be accumulated without work (Nji, 1987)

Education is a strong determinant of access to work and upward social mobility.

Gender disparities in resource allocation in Cameroon have revealed that the Cameroonian woman has only 1/3 as much access to post primary education as men. And since the variable of education has high multiplier value in development, it can be inferred that women with less education are deprived of the chances of effective participation in, and contribution to the development of their communities.

Education is both formal and non-formal. Newspapers play key roles in non- formal education. Newspapers should be seen as more than just simple conveyers of information. First, they should be considered as promoters of national cohesion. Second, the newspaper fulfils the socio-political function of conscientious building in society.

Third, the press also has the social function of informing both the grassroots and those in power in order to ensure political balance and social cohesion in society. A newspaper also has the additional task of “discovering and exploring new orientations” (Mulamba, 1979).

Yet, less than 5% of Cameroon's female literate population buys newspapers. Even with the "alternative press" provided by NGOs (e.g. Rural Development Review by INADES Formation and la Voix du Paysan and Business Times by SALLD), the Cameroonian woman remains misinformed, and uninformed as a result of gender-segregated high illiteracy levels and negative cultural attitudes towards reading. But reading is a solitary exercise. The Cameroonian woman is not by any standards a solitudinarian. She is more gregarious. Only a culture of reading can change the present pace of things.

Idleness is generally condemned in most Cameroon sub-cultures. Hard work tends to be encouraged because of the prestige and progress it brings to the individual and the community. Prestige, almost everywhere is attached to hard work. Among the Wolof of Senegal and in many parts of Cameroon (particularly the grassfields), a man or woman who works hard is highly regarded in the community.

Such a man or woman has little difficulty finding a spouse in his or her social class, where achievement and motivation are critical values in mate selection. Even though men and women face the challenge to prove their worth through work, female perceptions, expectations and belief in the virtues of hard work as bait for marriage tend to supersede those of men.

This tendency, in addition to the extra burden for women to bring food to the dining table in their homes explains to a large extent, why village women believe in work almost as a religion. Is it any wonder then that girls are initiated into the culture of work at the very tender age of 3 years in our society?

### **Part 3: Some Empirical Explanations for the Present Status of the Cameroonian Woman**

The socio-cultural explanations for women's status in human society are many and varied. I will attempt here to give a few explanations to moot discussion. All the examples are derived from research findings.

1. Discrimination in education is one of the main causes of female poverty, unemployment and underemployment. Even where education and vocational training are available, many educational institutions continue to offer stereotyped "feminine" skills to girls such as typing, nursing, sewing, catering and waitressing as opposed to scientific and technical knowledge.

2. Low access to higher education is another factor in gender discrimination in education. Earlier in this paper, it was shown that primary

school enrolment was 93% among girls in 1990. But this drops to 23% at the secondary school level.

3. A high fertility rate among school-age girls is a problem. Girls tend to get pregnant, marry early and quit school. Their drop-out rate is much higher than for boys. Poverty in Cameroon has been blamed for decreased school attendance for boys and especially girls (Nji, 1994).

4. Sexual harassment Women are constantly under threat in Cameroon to exchange sex for service. This keeps women in the perpetually subservient role of beggars and favour dispensers. For example, the success of female candidates in most professional and academic examinations in Cameroon is often a function of the degree of generosity with their bodies.

5. Women generally have low incomes, have high risk aversion and live marginal and dependent lives.

6. Women lack capital, have no collateral and little access to institutional credit.

7. Women tend to suffer from the effects of role strain arising from the multiple and complex roles that they perform in society.

8. The conception that most men have of women is often that of dependence; when women feel that they only complement men's work, they tend to behave in ways that reinforce this belief.

9. The complex health problems faced by women are sometimes a direct consequence of their work habits. Women transport on their heads and backs more volume of goods than is transported in vehicles. Travel for domestic purposes is often on foot over long distances and under very harsh climatic conditions.

10. Laws and customs impede women more than men in obtaining credit, productive inputs, education, information, medical care, legal services and in forging social relationships.

11. The "invisibility" of household work, and the non-attribution of economic value or cost to it, leads to mistaken and unrealistic assumptions by planners and policy-makers about women's work and their contributions to family health and stability.

12. African women burn themselves alive with inappropriate beauty products, chemicals and health technologies because they lack the education and information base to make wise choices and decisions. Others do so because of a false belief that black is not as beautiful as fair-complexioned body.

13. Marriage, divorce, death, inheritance laws and marriage customs (e.g. polygamy) have very negative impacts on the status of women. In polygynous homes, the death of a spouse can throw the entire family into a wild state of

confusion and disorder because surviving wives and their children tend to fight over the family estate.

14. Women who have achieved literacy tend to fall back into illiteracy even faster than men unless they have continuing opportunities and motivation to use their literacy skills. The rural woman is often caught in this snare faster than her urban counterpart.

15. The content of curricula and the attitude of teachers tend to favour boys more than girls in learning situations, be they formal or informal. The problem tends to be more acute in rural than urban schools.

16. Both bride price and dowry traditions, as well as the need for certainty about virginity (as is the practice in Northern Provinces of Cameroon) lead to early marriage, early pregnancy risks and high costs to development (Nji, 1994).

17. The fear of violence within the family tends to frustrate female assertiveness and impede the capacity to participate effectively in development. Ubiquitous male dominance in society tends to kill female initiative, creativity and drive.

18. Exposure to inappropriate media (TV, Radio Programs and Magazines) that do not reinforce dominant values is often counter-productive for women. Such exposure is often not in consonance with their needs and roles.

19. Structural effects influence women's status. Women who live in rural areas and urban slums have fewer chances of disbanding themselves from sex-role typing and gender-segregate tendencies in the community.

20. Family background, community value systems and the opportunity structure influence all peoples differently. Women are particularly vulnerable to these forces as a result of the roles they play and the circumstances that prescribe those roles.

## **Conclusions**

Improving the gender-responsiveness of development programs is a means to improve development itself. Projects, programs and policies that do not take into consideration the social differentiations in society and how these impact on the family are likely to worsen the situation of not only women, but that of men as well.

In Cameroon, development is impossible without the woman. Successful and sustainable social, economic, cultural and political development is possible only with the effective participation of women. The chances are even greater, if the woman is enlightened and motivated. They must also be recognized as

veritable agents of change in their own right. Therefore, if development agencies are to succeed in their missions, adjusting programs to sensitivities in gender bias is inevitable.

Gender bias and stickiness in gender roles in Cameroon did not come about by accident. Rather, this manifestation of deeply entrenched social, cultural and political customs, traditions and practices. But the times are changing. Gender roles are changing too.

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## Education sexuelle traditionnelle de la jeune fille Béti du Cameroun

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### Résumé

*L'éducation sexuelle traditionnelle de la femme Béti du Cameroun était-elle de nature à la préparer à une vie sexuelle adaptée aux conditions socio-économiques de l'heure? C'est la question à laquelle le présent article tente d'apporter quelques éléments de réponse. L'analyse anthropologique du milieu beti relève que la femme depuis la naissance fait l'objet de quelques considérations qui déterminent déjà l'orientation de sa sexualité. Elle l'apprendra ainsi pendant son enfance notamment à travers les jeux traditionnels et les habitudes alimentaires. Introduite jeune dans un foyer conjugal, elle découvre les principes et les règles qui s'imposent dans ce domaine. C'est une éducation somme toute informelle mais orientée vers deux fonctions précises: le mariage et la procréation. Les mutations sociales issues de l'action civilisatrice missionnaire, l'ouverture du nouveau cadre de vie dite moderne et tous ses corollaires prennent le dessus sur presque toutes les anciennes formules d'apprentissage sexuel. L'économie monétaire et autres déterminées économiques s'installent à la base et activent ainsi les comportements sexuels de la femme Béti sans pour autant l'aider à apporter la solution ni à l'invasion des MST qui la guettent quotidiennement, ni aux divers problèmes de maternité que ses activités sexuelles désordonnées vont l'obliger à subir.*

### Introduction

Cet exposé puise abondamment dans les résultats d'un projet que nous réalisons actuellement en groupe de chercheurs dans la région de Yaoundé et dans une zone rurale des populations de la province de l'Est. Ce projet s'intitule :

**“Apprentissage et vécu de la sexualité chez les jeunes camerounais de 15 à 30 ans”.** Dans le rapport de mi-chemin de ces recherches, l'hypothèse de travail est que la vulnérabilité des jeunes aux maladies sexuellement transmissibles (MST) est liée à une forme de sexualité socialement et

culturellement acquise. Il en ressort que la plupart des communautés des provinces du Centre et de l'Est ont surtout développé une sexualité de mariage et de procréation. Par ailleurs, la sexualité féminine, plus que celle des hommes, s'est révélée assez fragile, très souvent victime des caprices des hommes par conséquent, plus vulnérable aux MST.

Quelle est donc l'impact actuel d'une telle forme de sexualité sur la vie de ces populations? C'est la principale question à laquelle nous tentons de répondre. Evidemment en tant que phénoménal socio-culturel, le problème d'impact de la sexualité mérite d'être étudié dans un cadre plus ou moins réduit, à l'échelle ethnique au sein duquel se forment les mœurs et coutumes sexuels de base.

Le cas de l'éducation sexuelle des femmes Bété est présente dans cet exposé comme un exemple parmi tant d'autres, dans le cadre des populations du Centre et de l'Est. Nous présenterons cette éducation comme partant d'une base traditionnelle et rituelle informelle et évoluant vers une mutation notamment catalysée par l'avènement des activités coloniales modernes. Ce qui nous permettra enfin de citer quelques particularités associées à l'impact de cette mutation.

## **Cadre Traditionnel**

### **a. Eléments de formation et éducation dans la communauté Bété**

Eduquer quelqu'un se dit en bété "akomodo" et signifie recréer, raviver les énergies de la vie d'une personne. L'éducation bété traditionnelle se caractérise par la différence qu'elle fait entre une personne de sexe féminin et celle du sexe masculin. Dans l'ensemble, cette éducation repose, selon le sociologue Mballa Owono (1981: 103) sur un certain nombre d'éléments:

- l'attribution du nom: c'est un précédé qui permet d'identifier non seulement l'individu, mais surtout sa personnalité. Elle tient compte à la fois des circonstances de la naissance, des vertus du sexe, du charisme et des grandeurs de l'homonyme dont on veut attribuer le nom au nouveau-né;

- participation et apprentissage des jeux traditionnels : Il s'agit des jeux d'adresse et des jeux d'énigme qui ont été institués par la tradition et qui avaient pour but de cultiver l'intelligence du jeune enfant, de l'initier à la connaissance du monde (social, animal, Moral, etc. ...) et de l'introduire dans l'univers du langage et de la pensée bété;

- les rites: lis vent également dans le même sens que les jeux traditionnels. L'apprentissage rituel constitue une série de leçons pédagogiques qui conduisent à l'intégration et à la réintégration des personnes dans la société;

La prise en compte de ces différents éléments de formation montre que l'éducation traditionnelle bété embrasse des aspects aussi variés que la formation du caractère, le développement des aptitudes physiques et des qualités morales, l'acquisition des connaissances et des techniques nécessaires à la vie sociale de l'individu.

**b. Considérations de départ à la naissance d'un enfant fille**

Toute naissance chez les Bété est une réincarnation des ancêtres (Laburthe-Tolra, 1985: 215), car c'est la phase qui précède la mort. En un mot, c'est le retour des morts à la vie.

Les considérations liées à la naissance d'une fille découlent de cette notion de réincarnation de l'ancêtre. Elle est effective dans le cadre d'un enfant garçon car, les ancêtres, les plus connus et les plus vénérés sont des fondateurs de clan, de lignage ou de tribu. Or, ceux-ci ont toujours été des "hommes" (ram) donc, de sexe masculin. L'arrivée au monde d'un enfant garçon implique dans la tradition bété le retour d'un ancêtre; tandis que celle d'un enfant fille annonce plutôt l'accumulation des biens de promotion de la fondation sociale d'un homme. C'est ainsi qu'il convient d'expliquer la maxime bété qui considère la progéniture féminine comme une source de richesse pour le parent

|      |         |     |                  |      |           |
|------|---------|-----|------------------|------|-----------|
| Mon  | mininga | anë | atud             | asu  | mbonaé.   |
| Fils | femme   | est | source [revenus] | pour | géniteur. |

C'est, en effet, des personnes appelées à sortir du noyau familial pour aller créer une autre famille ailleurs dans le cadre d'un mariage.

L'enfant fille et l'enfant garçon occupent donc deux statuts différents dans la taxinomie bété. Après la naissance d'une fille, on a l'habitude de pousser deux you-you; mais à la naissance d'un garçon, on pousse un you-you de plus, soit au total trois you-you.

L'éducation sexuelle traditionnelle de la jeune fille bété trouve ainsi son canevas déjà trace.

**c. Apprentissage de la sexualité féminine**

Par rapport aux éléments fondamentaux de l'éducation du jeune bété, l'enfant fille trouve dès sa naissance un terrain de jeux traditionnels essentiellement réservés à sa catégorie de personne de sexe féminin. Notre enquête et nos observations sur la sexualité en milieu bété (Cf. Abega, S.C., 1994:72) nous ont permis de collecter une gamme variée de ces jeux pratiques par les adolescents dès l'âge de 12 ans.

Parmi les plus fréquents, on cite le jeu de “papa et maman”. C’est une petite mise en scène des activités des parents observées par les enfants dans leur vie en famille. Dans ce jeu pratiqué habituellement entre frère et sœur, un peu à l’écart des parents absents pour les travaux des champs, on peut observer que le garçon joue le rôle de “papa” en donnant les ordres à sa sœur qu’il considère à ce moment comme sa femme. De son côté, la sœur “épouse” simule l’obéissance à ces ordres car provenant de son frère qu’elle considère à ce moment comme un mari. On la voit par conséquent se presser à préparer de la nourriture dans les vieilles boîtes pour le mari et les enfants imaginaires qui ont faim. Dans un autre jeu, le “bébé en herbe”, la jeune fille bété s’initie à la maternité, activité à laquelle elle est destinée dès son âge adulte. Le jeu consiste pour l’essentiel à arracher une tige d’herbe, à bien nettoyer ses racines que l’on exploite comme les cheveux de la poupée et les brindilles comme son corps et le reste des membres. Pendant de longues heures dans la journée, l’enfant fille passe ainsi son temps soit à laver son bébé, à l’habiller, à le tresser, à le porter sur le dos ou à le bercer. Le troisième jeu pratiqué par les enfants le plus souvent pendant le clair de lune c’est “à la découverte de la cachette” (Saba-saba en bété). Il divise les enfants en deux groupes mixtes : celui de ceux qui vont se cacher par derrière les cases ou dans les plantations autour des concessions, et celui de ceux qui iront à leur découverte. Ce jeu donne l’occasion aux adolescents de se constituer en petits couples d’affinités sexuelles qui vont très souvent se cacher dans des refuges très introuvables par ceux qui sont chargés de les découvrir. Selon les témoignages de certains anciens Bété qui l’avaient pratiqué, les couples d’adolescents ainsi cachés profitent du temps des recherches des autres adolescents pour simuler les accouplements avec ou sans pénétration réelle.

L’autre niveau de l’apprentissage de la sexualité par la jeune fille Bété se situe sur le comportement alimentaire. Laburthe-Tolra (Op. Cit.: 160) constate en effet que les interdits alimentaires sont liés au statut social de l’individu, c’est-à-dire à l’accomplissement d’un statut social provisoire, ou à l’attente d’un but à atteindre. Suivant les traditions bété, la plupart des interdits alimentaires institués pour la jeune fille trouvent leurs explications dans le cadre de la procréation, du maintien en forme du physique féminin. La jeune fille doit ainsi éviter de manger le gros lézard (Nka’a) ou de l’antilope (So) de peur de donner plus tard des enfants sourds et indolents. Pendant la grossesse, la femme Bété ne doit pas manger le serpent, le singe, les pattes du bœuf afin d’éviter la malformation du bébé dans son sein.

Ces interdits alimentaires s’accompagnent de beaucoup d’autres interdits d’ordre général. Il s’agit par exemple de l’interdit aux femmes Bété de cuisiner et de cultiver dans les champs pendant la période des menstruations. Cet

interdit, selon les grands-mères, obligeait les femmes à rester en réclusion dans une case appelée “case des filles” (Nda Bengan) durant toute la période des règles. Le sang menstruel, selon les analyses anthropologiques (Mary Douglas: 1966), a toujours été regardé comme chargé du pouvoir de souillure et de pollution. C’est ce qui pénalise la femme en pleine menstruation. Il était en effet admis qu’une goutte du sang menstruel sur les cultures compromettait les récoltes de ces cultures. Par ailleurs, pendant la période de réclusion, il convient de noter que la jeune fille était assistée par de plus anciennes femmes, plus averties et plus aguerries aux problèmes d’éducation sexuelle de la femme. Celles-ci échangeaient des informations et des connaissances, et instruisaient la jeune fille sur plusieurs domaines notamment sur l’obstétrique, la puériculture, les thérapeutiques des maladies sexuellement transmissibles ou infantiles, les techniques amoureuses, les contraceptifs traditionnels, etc.

La pratique du mariage précoce chez les Béti a permis la mise en place d’un mécanisme informel d’éducation de la jeune épouse. En fait, la jeune fille était choisie comme épouse de X dès le jour de sa naissance. Pour avoir rendu des services quelconques pendant l’accouchement de sa mère, le futur mari (habituellement très âgé) s’accordait avec les parents du nouveau-né pour qu’il devienne plus tard son énième épouse. Ainsi, dès l’âge de 4 à 5 ans, la jeune Béti quittait la case paternelle pour son futur foyer. Le mécanisme d’éducation consistait à placer cette jeune épouse sous l’encadrement de la mère de l’époux ou de la première femme (Ekomba) du foyer jusqu’à ce qu’elle atteigne l’âge d’une épouse sexuellement utilisable. Au cours de cette période d’encadrement, la première épouse (Ekomba) donnait des informations et transmettait des connaissances à la jeune épouse notamment sur l’hygiène sexuelle, les techniques amoureuses, la cuisine, la maternité, les attitudes en cas de menstruations, etc.

Dans la vie active, la femme Béti ne cessait de bénéficier de temps en temps d’un complément sur l’éducation sexuelle. Ceci apparaît notamment dans les divers rites féminins qui avaient été institués en milieu béti.

Parmi ces rites, beaucoup d’études (Laburthe-Tolra : 1985 J.F. Vincent: 1976) se sont intéressées aux rites mevungu et ewodo. Ces rites essentiellement exécutés par les femmes d’un certain âge, jouaient le rôle propitiatoire. Ils permettaient à une femme soupçonnée de posséder un pouvoir maléfique (Evu), de s’en débarrasser. Selon certains auteurs, c’est le premier test rituel qui était fait sur la jeune fille au moment d’aller en mariage. Les résultats positifs, à ce test, c’est-à-dire la preuve de l’absence de ‘evu’ chez la mariée, laissaient prévoir qu’elle ferait une progéniture sans problème, que sa santé était au beau fixe et que son état sexuel était favorable à tout rapport avec son mari. Ces deux rites féminins avaient également la particularité de servir de pratique

thérapeutique pour les maladies féminines ou sexuellement transmissibles. Il s'agit de l'Akyae ou l'accouchement difficile à cause des esprits maléfiques que posséderait la femme enceinte; l'Anyos ou le mal du rapprochement des naissances, l'edzawos ou les difficultés de conception dues à la reprise précoce des rapports sexuels après l'accouchement et celles dues à la transgression des interdits.

La deuxième catégorie de rites féminins groupait des rites de purification et de sanction. Dans cet ordre, les rites mazili tuizoe yanda bit (rite de la tribu Mvele, groupe bété). Le kua, l'ekore ntomba, le ndziba, le tsogo et le ndongo osoe ont été abondamment étudiés et décrits par M-P. Botchet De The (1985 252). Selon ses analyses. Les femmes Bété disposaient de tous ces rites "pour combattre le mal qui cause la stérilité et pour acquérir la taconnait".

La troisième catégorie de rites féminins a pour but de protéger les mères allaitantes contre les esprits, les maries des ancêtres ...

Dans les mêmes travaux de Bochet de The, beaucoup de ces rites sont présentée comme ayant un impact particulier dans le domaine de l'apprentissage et du vécu de la sexualité par les femmes bété. Il s'agit principalement des rites eban abum et l'eyomolo meki me fam (litt. = vouer une femme au malheur par le germe fécondant de son mari) qui, soutenus par un serment de fidélité de la femme à son mari, ont pour effet d'aider le sperme à aboutir à une conception". Le rite ndan mon (= passer outre l'enfant), quant à lui, est le rite de la reprise des relations sexuelles avec son conjoint après un accouchement.

#### **d. Une sexualité de mariage et de procréation**

A travers ces quelques éléments de formation destinés à l'éducation sexuelle féminine en milieu bété, ils se dégagent deux grandes orientations: c'est une éducation qui préparait la fille au mariage; c'est également une éducation qui était basée notamment sur l'exercice de la fonction de mère, c'est-à-dire une personne chargée de procréer et d'assurer l'éclosion du ménage de son mari.

La première orientation s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'organisation sociale traditionnelle bété qui, en fait, est une organisation hiérarchisée en classes d'âge (Mballa Owono, 1981:99). Tandis que le sommet de cette hiérarchie est occupé par les hommes murs, la base, elle, est soutenue par les femmes et les enfants. Les domestiques et autres clients constituent la couche la plus inférieure de cette hiérarchie, Chaque classe d'âge ou chaque catégorie de personnes était ainsi définie en fonction de l'âge et surtout de la fonction qu'elle devait jouer au sein de la dynamique de la société. C'est ici qu'il convient de situer le rôle de la fille dans la société bété, Selon le sociologue

Henri Ngoa (1968), le système du mariage de cette société permet de comprendre que la femme, élément de la structure sociale appelé à sortir du groupe à travers le mariage (alug) et la remise de la dot (meveq), apporte ainsi à son groupe social des atouts socio-politiques et économiques nécessaires et importants. Elle permet l'établissement des relations d'alliance et de paix entre divers clans. Grace à elle, on assiste à un cumul de biens et à une livraison de plusieurs services des personnes n'appartenant pas au groupe.

La deuxième orientation de l'éducation sexuelle féminine, avons-nous dit, est basée sur la procréation. Effectivement, parmi les rôles assignés à la classe féminine dans la société bété, figure celui de renouveler et de promouvoir le groupe social. De ce fait, la première valeur d'une femme c'est d'être féconde. La pratique de plusieurs rites de fécondité évoques plus haut est très édifiante à ce propos. Mais, ce n'était pas une valeur unique. La société bété appréciait d'abord la femme au foyer à travers sa procréation. Plus tard, lorsqu'elle atteignait l'âge de la catégorie de femme-mère (Nyia mininga) ou femme-fondatrice (Mbonde) dans son foyer, la société lui accordait le droit à la parole publique (Mbock, C. G., 1984) et la participation aux réunions des sociétés secrètes du clan. À dire vrai, il s'agissait d'une femme qui avait déjà connu la ménopause. Ainsi placée hors de la vie sexuelle, la société lui permettait d'acquérir un statut pseudo-viril; elle était donc capable de dicter par exemple, son expérience sur la maternité et l'éducation sexuelle.

## **La Mutation**

### **1. Yaoundé: pays des Bété et installation des explorateurs occidentaux**

La base des mutations de l'éducation sexuelle des jeunes filles Bété est un fait historique. Les événements remontent à très longtemps. Ils commencent avec l'arrivée des premiers allemands qui, pénétrant dans le pays à travers les voies fluviales au niveau de la côte maritime du littoral, vont atteindre Yaoundé et installer leur "Station" vers les années 1888-1889 (Mebenga, T. L., 1985: 11).

La première conséquence du débarquement des explorateurs occidentaux en pays bété aura été immédiatement le bouleversement de la structure sociale bété. En effet, le plan de la station allemande et de ses environs établi en 1911 (Franqueville, 1970:15) signale non seulement la présence des logements militaires, ceux des missionnaires et des explorateurs allemands mais encore elle situe les divers terrains exploités par les compagnies commerciales. La culture du maïs, de l'hévéa, du tabac et de l'ananas autour de la station avait



nécessairement drainé les populations bété des deux sexes pour servir de main d'œuvre dans les plantations.

A ce niveau, on va assister à des bouleversements importants dans les comportements sexuels des populations bété; c'est celui de l'habitat car les ouvriers vont être amenés à se rapprocher du lieu des plantations abandonnant momentanément leurs épouses et leur progéniture au village natal. C'est également le bouleversement des rapports sociaux à cause des raids que les militaires coloniaux organisaient dans les villages pour attraper les jeunes gens et les envoyer transporter des bagages coloniaux vers la côte ou aller vendre des palmistes à la côte du littoral. Ces activités coloniales aux allures de travaux forcés commencent donc en pays bété et vont s'étendre sur les environs, notamment chez les populations Maka et autres de la région de l'Est (Manga Mado, R., 1970). Les conséquences, partout, furent les mêmes: déstabilisation des foyers locaux, déportation des jeunes garçons, pillage des jeunes filles par les étrangers, bref, bouleversement des structures et des normes dans chaque localité.

Le bouleversement plus important viendra du côté des missionnaires qui non seulement vont enrôler beaucoup de chefs de famille dans la doctrine chrétienne mais également créent des structures ou centres d'accueil (Sixa ou Sister's) destinés à donner une éducation sexuelle, conjugale et même morale complète aux jeunes femmes en cours de mariage. Les écrits du Camerounais Mongo Bété (1976) en constituent une bonne référence.

## **2. Yaoundé: Pays Bété et capitale du Cameroun**

Les bouleversements en matière des comportements sexuels des bété connaîtront une autre ampleur avec le choix de Yaoundé comme capitale politique du Cameroun. A partir des années 1960, période de l'accession de cette ancienne colonie allemande à l'indépendance, Yaoundé va entamer son long processus d'urbanisation (Franqueville, 1987 :446); des ecclés. primaires et secondaires soutenues notamment par les missionnaires vont ouvrir leurs portes provoquant ainsi une forte marée des jeunes yaoundéens et d'élèves de ses environs. A en croire le recensement de Franqueville, 17,7% des élèves du Secondaire et du Technique étaient nés à Yaoundé, tandis que 40% étaient originaires de la Province du Centre Sud qui abritait à cette époque le pays bété. Plus intéressant encore, le géographe de l'ORSTOM nous signale qu'au même moment, les taux de scolarisation par sexe se situaient 58,9% pour les garçons et 47,6% pour les filles à Yaoundé pour la tranche d'âge de 15 à 19 ans, tranche dans laquelle nos propres recherches (Cf. Abega, C. S., 1994) ont situé l'âge du départ en mariage des jeunes filles. C'est également la période au



cours de laquelle les jeunes de la ville de Yaoundé, tous les deux sexes confondus, vivent intensément leur sexualité.

Parallèlement à cette urbanisation de Yaoundé et au bouleversement de ses structures sociales, les petites agglomérations environnantes abritant notamment les autres familles bété vent connaître une certaine éclosion, sous l'impulsion des activités économiques qui s'y déroulent, C'est le cas de Mbalmayo et Akonolinga, sièges d'une mosaïque de petites communautés bété localisées au sud de Yaoundé, qui se développent grâce à la cacao culture et à l'exploitation du bois.

Le développement de Yaoundé et de ses environs, en tant que siège des institutions camerounaises, aura ainsi amené les populations bété à perdre leurs structures de contrôle de la sexualité de leur progéniture. Le christianisme, dans sa mission de civilisation des cultures païennes, n'a pas eu de mal à balayer la plupart des rites féminins évoqués plus haut et à diriger les chrétiennes qui avaient des problèmes sexuels soit vers des dispensaires missionnaires soit auprès des hommes d'église qui passaient en même temps pour des conseillers conjugaux. C'est dans ce cadre que furent institués les Centres d'accueil (sister's ou sixa) signales tantôt. Quant à "l'égale des blancs", son impact n'a pas été plus ressenti comme un apport de nouvelles connaissances sur la sexualité ; elle a plutôt crée la séparation des jeunes filles avec leur milieu traditionnel ou se forgeait jadis leur éducation sexuelle. Par ailleurs, la possibilité qu'elle offrait aux jeunes des deux sexes de s'instruire et de glaner un niveau d'éducation semblable sinon compétitif, a permis à la jeune fille Bété de sortir de l'incontournable destin traditionnel qui lui était réserve (aller en mariage, cuisiner, enfanter). Désormais, constate Bilongo, B. (1983 42), celle-ci peut contacter d'autres milieux culturels, choisir ses propres partenaires, consulter des personnes autres que celles de son clan pour ses problèmes sexuels, aller dans des centres de sante modernes pour se faire soigner.

Il est ainsi donné à l'observation de la communauté bété de constater un grand changement des comportements et des rapports sexuels. Son impact se mesure aujourd'hui au volume des problèmes que les filles bété rencontrent dans leur vie sexuelle tant en milieu traditionnel qu'en milieu urbain ou le déterminisme socioéconomique semble s'ériger en puissance.

## **L'impact**

### **1. Le recul de la polygynie**

La polygynie bété, à l'image de celle pratiquée par la plupart des communautés camerounaises, se justifiait essentiellement par des raisons

économiques et politiques. Avoir beaucoup de femmes dans son foyer, c'est augmenter sa force de production et renforcer son pouvoir de commandement. Faire beaucoup d'enfants à son mari constituait pour la femme, un acte de soutien pour l'aboutissement des idéaux sus-évoqués.

Or, il se pose aujourd'hui à certaines filles bété un choix difficile à opérer entre le rôle de l'épouse tout court et celui de la mère. Est-ce essentiellement pour faire des enfants qu'il faut aller en mariage? Le modernisme (l'école occidentale, les découvertes scientifiques) fournissent à la communauté bété des connaissances qui amènent par exemple les femmes à prouver leurs capacités sur d'autres terrains que celui de la procréation. Beaucoup de celles-ci, grâce à leur formation, sont aujourd'hui des épouses directrices d'entreprise, femmes d'affaires, leaders politiques, autorités juridiques ... Ces nouveaux statuts sociaux des femmes servent souvent de base dans le choix actuel du partenaire chez les hommes comme chez les femmes bété elles-mêmes. La pratique de la dot subit également des modifications dans certains villages où les familles ont tendance à "vendre" plus cher, une fille pour laquelle elles ont consenti plus de sacrifices dans la formation. Dans d'autres, on refuse de céder sa main à un partenaire démun.

Au niveau même de la procréation, on assiste aujourd'hui au débat entre les partenaires pour la détermination de la taille de la famille. Dans une enquête ponctuelle menée auprès des jeunes bété des quartiers de Yaoundé (juin-juillet 1992), il s'est dégagé pour les jeunes interrogés la nécessité d'éviter de faire beaucoup d'enfants ou d'en faire involontairement. Tandis que les femmes évoquent la situation de parents irresponsable, attitude que les hommes alimentent de nos jours dans les rapports entre partenaires, les hommes de leur côté mesurent avec gravité le poids de la charge qui leur revient aujourd'hui de nourrir et d'éduquer plusieurs enfants. La situation est devenue d'autant plus pénible que la Caisse Nationale de Prévoyance Sociale (C. N. P. S.) n'apporte plus aux parents, salaries, sa participation financière trimestrielle connue sous forme d'allocation familiale, et que, pour les parents agriculteurs, les sources de revenus ont diminué avec la baisse drastique des prix des produits de rente (cacao, café).

L'impact de ce qui précède se lit par conséquent au niveau de la régression de la pratique du régime polygynique chez les Bété et surtout la nouvelle orientation de l'éducation sexuelle de la jeune Bété à la procréation et à la cuisson des aliments dans le foyer se sont ajoutés des fonctions plus avantageuses pour une meilleure condition féminine de la femme Bété en rapport avec son niveau d'instruction et/ou son statut professionnel. La femme Bété ne subit plus son éducation sexuelle, elle la décide sous d'autres facteurs extra-coutumiers et l'oriente en fonction de ses capacités socialement

reconnues qui lui permettent de jouer les premiers rôles dans sa vie ou dans son foyer.

## **2. Fille de la campagne: la fin d'un mythe**

La meilleure épouse bété était jugée auparavant en fonction du lieu de résidence de celle-ci avant le départ en mariage. On distinguait en effet la fille élevée à la campagne (Ngon ya Nnam) de la citadine (Ngon ya tison). Ces deux milieux correspondaient à deux formes d'éducation sexuelle différentes, notamment chez les jeunes filles. A la campagne, la fille bété bénéficiait d'une éducation sexuelle qui la préparait à une vie conjugale de procréation et strictement réglementée par des rites et des normes rigoureuses. La résidence « Nnam » ou campagne et le qualificatif ( Ngon ya Nnam » conféraient à la fille le sérieux dans le comportement, la maîtrise de la vie sexuelle, la santé du corps, la puissance et la résistance dans les tâches ménagères, la garantie de la fécondité. Bref, tout ce à quoi on doit s'attendre d'une bonne épouse. C'est également l'une des raisons qui explique le fait que, beaucoup de jeunes célibataires bété et nouvellement en service en ville, allaient directement chercher les épouses à la campagne, les amenaient en ville et les initiaient eux-mêmes à la vie urbaine.

Aujourd'hui, le milieu rural bété semble presque entièrement contaminé par les comportements sexuels propres au contexte urbain et aux manifestations des tendances d'une vie dite moderne. En fait, les fréquents rapports ville-campagne entretenus autour de Yaoundé notamment par ses populations (visites des parents, cérémonies traditionnelles, vacances scolaires ou congés administratifs...) ont fini par casser cette barrière (Franqueville, 1987). Les jeunes de tout milieu justifient ainsi leur ouverture vers le monde extérieur par le désir de se découvrir, de découvrir d'autres cultures - mieux encore d'autres pratiques sexuelles - de s'auto former et d'expérimenter d'autres responsabilités. Certaines familles rurales elles-mêmes favorisent cet état de choses: face à la satisfaction des familles qui reçoivent régulièrement des présents de la part de leurs filles résidant en ville (présents obtenus à partir des activités sexuelles qu'elles y mènent), les familles des filles encore cultivatrices auraient bien envie d'en recevoir autant et ne tardent pas à exciter ces dernières à tenter la même expérience urbaine. L'adaptation de ces nouvelles venues à la vie sexuelle urbaine est un autre sujet sur lequel nous ne nous attarderons pas ici. Notons seulement qu'elle produit des conséquences biologiques et sociales souvent très regrettables.

Ce comportement semble prendre racine chez les Maka, groupe voisin des Bété (Abega & all: 1994). Il apparaît par conséquent illusoire aujourd'hui, dans le cadre des comportements sexuels, de parler d'une "fille de la campagne" distincte de la "fille de la ville" en milieu bété,

### **3. Une vie sexuelle désordonnée**

Les mutations dans l'éducation sexuelle traditionnelle des jeunes femmes bété apparaissent aussi, dans une large mesure, comme sources de plusieurs problèmes qui créent à coup sûr un désordre dans leur vie sexuelle. En parlant avec les jeunes de Yaoundé au sujet des grands problèmes de leur vie sexuelle, les filles citent particulièrement les promesses fallacieuses de mariage, les grossesses, les désirées, la paternité inconnue, la paternité irresponsable bref, tout ce qui pousse la jeune fille à se sentir abusée par un partenaire. La vie sexuelle de ces jeunes filles est donc, à la limite, pleine de déceptions de tous genres. Ces déceptions proviennent de plusieurs facteurs: le manque de sources d'information pouvant permettre aux jeunes de poser leurs actes sexuels en connaissance de cause, le silence des parents sur les problèmes sexuels de leurs enfants, la soif éminente des filles d'exploiter le commerce sexuel pour combier leurs besoins matériels...

Les jeunes partenaires se trouvent ainsi lancés dans une vie sexuelle où plaisirs et déboires rivalisent; les solutions aux problèmes qui s'y posent sont à la fois peu maîtrisées et moins pratiquées. L'exemple le plus édifiant est celui de la pratique des méthodes de contraception. La publicité des méthodes modernes du planning familial se brise ainsi sur le doute qu'ont les jeunes filles de 12 à 35 ans sur leur efficacité. Elles les trouvent couteuses et très compliquées dans leur mise en pratique. En même temps, les pratiques artisanales de contraception (introduction des herbes sauvages ou des comprimés de nivaquine dans l'appareil génital féminin...), que transmettent encore quelques femmes bété de plus de 35 ans à leurs cadettes, demeurent courantes.

### **Conclusion**

Nous avons tenté de retrouver, tout au long de cet exposé, la cause fondamentale du désordre sexuel des femmes bété actuelles. Nous sommes ainsi partis du principe selon lequel les problèmes sexuels que rencontrent aujourd'hui ces femmes sont issus d'une forme d'éducation sexuelle traditionnelle qui n'avait pas fait une place aux mutations modernes. Une forme d'éducation sexuelle qui était axée essentiellement sur le mariage et la procréation. Les mutations des comportements sexuels de ces femmes semblent avoir été déclenchées par l'arrivée des explorateurs occidentaux et amplifiées par le phénomène d'urbanisation du pays bété en tant que capitale de l'Etat Camerounais. La principale conséquence fut le bouleversement des rapports sociaux pendant que l'impératif scolaire éloquait les jeunes filles de leur foyer traditionnel d'éducation. Les structures missionnaires implantées

dans presque tout le pays bété, diffusent une nouvelle forme d'éducation sexuelle, basée sur des normes chrétiennes, et participent de surcroît à la disparition des rites féminins sur la sexualité.

On peut alors mesurer l'impact de ces mutations notamment à partir des grands problèmes qui se posent aux femmes bété actuellement. C'est ainsi qu'à cote du régime polygynique qui les condamnait à la politique démographique essentiellement nataliste, on est amené à constater que, grâce à une scolarisation poussée, les femmes, plus que les hommes de cette communauté, découvrent par elles-mêmes d'autres possibilités de faire éclore leur féminité en dehors de la procréation et du mariage. Désormais la sexualité de la femme bété se fait avec des concepts nouveaux et des considérations modernes: femme scolarisée, femme salariée, femme diplômée... qui rendent, par le fait, la procréation et le mariage des facteurs optionnels ou des sujets de débats animés entre partenaires avant ou en cours de mariage. Par ailleurs, à cause des rapports ville/campagne sans cesse croissants qui forgent l'homogénéité des comportements de ces deux milieux sociaux, il apparaît aujourd'hui comme une dérision le fait de coller sur la fille de campagne l'image d'une épouse idéale, par rapport à la citadine. C'est la preuve même de rêche des pouvoirs traditionnels sur l'éducation sexuelle des jeunes aujourd'hui.

Face à cette éclipse du contrôle de la sexualité par les structures traditionnelles et à côté des impératifs qui s'imposent aujourd'hui à l'émancipation de la femme bété, on assiste ainsi à la naissance d'une sexualité des déterminismes socioéconomiques. A notre avis, cette option semble donc justifier les déceptions que dans la vie sexuelle. A travers elles, c'est toute la société qui subit le poids des problèmes y associés: abandon du partenaire, source de la paternité inconnue ou irresponsable, avortements provoqués et suivis des actes suicidaires, l'entrée et la propagation des maladies sexuellement transmissibles et du SIDA

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## **The Challenges of Social Change to the African Family: A Situational Analysis of the Family in Kenya**

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### **Introduction**

The family, being the basic social unit, is the core material out of which societies are made. Thus, it is at the centre of any society's management and development. According to St. Augustine:

*The human family constitutes the beginning and the essential element of society. Every beginning points to some end of the same nature, and every element to the perfection of the whole of which the element is part. Thus, it becomes evident that peace in the family, and the order and harmony of rulers and ruled must directly be actualized from the order and harmony arising out of creative guidance and commensurate response in the family.*

Many others, from all professions and persuasions, have like Anshe acknowledged the primacy of the family institution to societal order and development. For example, Britain's prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, in her speech to the general assembly of the Church of Scotland noted:

*The basic ties of the family at the heart of our society are the very nursery of civic virtue. It is on the family that we in the government build our own policies for welfare, education and care.*

The central place of the family in society can never be overemphasized. The family should be of significant interest to anybody concerned with the larger society. Indeed, as argued by William J. Goode, the family is theoretically significant because the larger society elicits from individuals through the family; familial duties are the direct sole responsibility of individuals in their societies.



On the threshold of the third millennium, the family in Africa, as in other part of the world is in crisis: it is characterized by immense change in all aspects including structure, values and functions. This makes the family institution in Africa extremely vulnerable and puts African development at stake. Being the basic social unit, the family is a powerful agent of social, political and economic development.

This paper presents some of the challenges of social change to the African family in Kenya. The basic assumption held is that contemporary families in Africa are faced with drastic and immense changes to the point of being in crisis. This has affected the family institution in terms of composition, structure, values and functions and consequently affected societal management and development. For example, the disintegration of certain cultural and religious values and social networks has significantly contributed to the high prevalence of sexual immorality with all its resultant effects such as HIV/AIDS.

In analysing the situation of the family in Kenya, this writer will discuss the challenges of westernization, modernization and globalization. Special attention will be paid to the introduction of Christianity in Kenya and the effect of this on the socio-cultural milieu in terms of the functions of the family unit. Thereafter, some of the governmental strategies of supporting the family in its attempts to adapt to the crisis will be examined. Finally, drawing from the entire presentation, conclusions and recommendations on how to strengthen the family for societal management and development in Africa will be made. The need for specific social policies geared at strengthening the family in Kenya is presented as a prerequisite for national development in the next century.

This paper is of theological significance. The mission of the Church in Kenya in protecting the family from disintegration is analysed. The Church is challenged to show it relevant and valid beyond the year 2000.

#### **a. Definition of the African Family**

The family has been defined as the universal basic social unit. Besides religion, it is the only formally developed social institution in all societies. At the simplest level, Bronislaw Malinowski defines the family as:

*a legal union of one man and one woman, together with their offspring, bound by reciprocal rights and duties, and cooperating for the sake of economic and moral survival.*

Socio-anthropologists have identified this type of a family as a nuclear family. At a complex level, there is the extended family which is made up of



many couples and their children all of whom are related by marriage, blood or adoption over several generations. Other types of families may be identified such as the single-parent family (made up of one parent and his/her children) and the homosexual family (made up of two people of the same sex who may or may not have children).

In spite of the family being a universal phenomenon, it varies from place to place and from time to time in terms of nature, character, values and functions. The nuclear family is said to be common in European societies, extended families are mostly found in African societies while homosexual families may be traced only to the last ten years mostly in American societies. All over the world, the family institution is experiencing change in all aspects in a way that it is becoming increasingly difficult to define conclusively to include all accepted types.

The family in Africa is as difficult to define as the family in many other places. Except for the homosexual family, all other family types are found. According to T.O. Odetola and A. Ademola, the extended family was and still is the most prevalent type in many African societies. But the extended family has also been changing on many aspects over time. For example, due to social change, an extended family may no longer be maintained as a 'household' or a 'homestead' where all members live within a common residence. Many factors combine to make this difficult. For instance, urbanization with its housing problems may separate people who still regard themselves as members of one family. In such instances, "the extended family is maintained through visiting and economic support". The questions that such changes in family pattern raise are: can such social units where relations are maintained from some physical distance be regarded as families? Do the members function as they would if they were sharing residence as a 'household' or 'homestead'?

As extended families continue to disintegrate, more and more nuclear families are being formed in Kenya. Migration, especially rural to urban migration is one of the major causes of this disintegration. However, there are other forces at play. For example, the cash economy introduced over the colonial period affects the family structure. As noted by Christine Oppong:

*Economically and morally men and women become increasingly independent of kin groups, as access to resources and positions of power depend more upon voluntary labour contracts and personal wealth rather than rights in jointly held family estates.*

As the importance of large kin groups falls, more and more nuclear families are created. The nuclear families are also becoming more common as more people opt for monogamous unions. According to the Kenya

Demographic Health Survey 1989, polygyny which is a lot more common than polyandry in Kenya, is steadily declining. 23% of currently married people are in polygamous unions, a decline from 25% and 30% in 1984 and 1977/78 respectively. Most Africans are now opting for monogamous unions because basically it is becoming more and more difficult to support many spouses and their children within the current economic reality. In an article on Kenyan families and their attitudes towards family formation, E.H.O. Ayiamba notes that economic pressure influences ideal family size norms of many Kenyans especially the educated and urban residents. Ayiamba further notes that men have replaced polygyny with concubines and mistresses.

The nuclear family has also been changing in other aspects such as the number of children, residence and values. For example, due to such aspects of change as urbanization and migration, all members of a nuclear family may not live together. It is becoming common to have spouses and their unmarried children living in different towns in search of education and employment. Sometimes the entire group may never meet except over school and national holidays. This separation may affect family functions and values as will be discussed later.

Another type of family that is found in contemporary African societies is the single-parent family. This phenomenon usually results from unmarried motherhood, separation, divorce, desertion or death. The single-parent family was rare in traditional African societies because separation, divorce and desertion were highly discouraged. Moreover, specific systems were in place to control unmarried motherhood and widowhood. For example, girls who got married out of wedlock would be forced to marry old, men as second and consequent wives while wife-inheritance and remarriage ensured that people whose spouses had died did not necessarily become widows.

Most single-parent families in Kenya and in Africa in general are female-headed households where women are single parents. According to Kayongo Male, in the rural areas single-parent families result mostly from deserting husbands (partial or total), while in urban areas, it results mostly from unmarried motherhood, divorce, separation and death.

One of the major causes of single-parenthood in Africa has to do with the change in moral values especially on premarital sex. Premarital sex is no longer discouraged and premarital virginity seems not to be a value anymore. Indeed, more and more women are getting pregnant outside marriage and choosing to be single parents, as implied by the increasing number of the average children per single mother. J. O. Osiemo indicates that the average number of children per single mother in Kenya, for example, is 4.09 which are slightly less than the average number of children per nuclear family.

In traditional societies in Africa, families were either matrilineal or patrilineal with patrilocal residential patterns. This is not always the case today. Some families, especially single parent ones are forced to be matrilineal even where neither matrilineal nor patrilocal residential patterns exist. So is it with other types of families in Africa. Urbanization and other forces of modernization rather than cultural tradition dictate family residence.

Most traditional societies in Africa were patriarchal; male authority was dominant. Today, the situation is different for many families. More often than not family power depends on one's ability to provide financial and other economic support to the family. Within this contemporary set up, both men and women jockey for resources and power. This has led to problems especially those related to gender role conflict.

Whether a family is extended, nuclear or single-parent, individuals within the family unit relate to one another in their various roles towards the achievement of certain family objectives and goals. These include reproduction, provision of basic needs, socialization, economic cooperation, affection, religious upbringing, psychosocial security, and intergenerational communication among other goals. The following section presents the challenges of social Change to the functions of the family in Africa, with specific reference to Christianity in Kenya. The specific questions to which the section is addressed are: what are some of the major functions of the family in Africa? How were these functions affected in traditional Kenyan societies? What is the impact of Christianity and secularization on the achievement of these functions? What are some of the problems arising from this?

### **The challenge of social Change to African Family**

Regardless of time and/or place, the family is a multi-functional institution: within a specific social network, individuals related to one another in their various roles as husband, wife, father, mother, daughter, son and sibling, among others, in the process of seeking to achieve certain objectives and goals. This section discusses only two of the basic functions of the family in Africa with specific reference to the impact of Christianity on performance of these functions and the consequential effects.

From a socio-religious approach, the reproductive role of the family is the most important function because it insures that the family and thereby the larger society is perpetuated. In Kenya, reproduction remains one of the major goals of marriage; the high value given to children is a common characteristic of the family in Kenya. This is manifested in the rarity of Kenyan couples who

have chosen to remain childless. It is manifested also in that polygamy is often resorted to where one of the spouses is barren.

The other major function of the family is socialization through which members get to know their rights, their duties and how to play their different roles in different situations. Through the socialization process, various members of the family are educated on what is expected of them in relation to others and how to perform their various roles. In this section, the two roles (reproduction and socialization) will be discussed as they interrelate.

In many traditional Kenyan societies, there were specific systems and values that were put in place to ensure that the reproductive and socialization functions of the family were met to the full. First and foremost, premarital sex was condemned in nearly all Kenyan societies; only a few societies such as the Kamba of Eastern Kenya considered virginity at marriage a shame. To enable the youth avoid premarital sex and preserve virginity, various religious and cultural practices, taboos and other restrictions were put in place.

The single major practice common to all societies in Kenya which impacts significantly on sexual behaviour of the youth is initiation. Throughout the initiation period, which generally occurred between ages 10 and 15, initiation rites were performed as part of the education of young people. Religious and cultural values were imparted on young people on all spheres of life.

On their sexuality, the youth received education on how to relate to the opposite sex, why and how to avoid premarital sex; the value of marriage, and the value of children, among other issues. Specific practices indicate that the sexual needs of the young people were met without necessarily getting them into premarital sex. Among the Nandi of the Rift Valley Province of Kenya, over part of the initiation process, girls and boys were allowed to sleep together in a hut called Sikiroino where they were free to engage in any sexual penetration. This practice met the youth's sexual needs and at the same time enhanced their sexual control. A similar practice for the same purpose was carried out among the Kikuyu of Central Kenya which was referred to Ngwiko. To enhance sexual morality, sex taboos and restrictions were created and the youth made aware of them over the initiation period.

With the advent of Christianity in Kenya in the 19th Century, initiation was condemned as a heathen practice. Clitoridectomy was especially most condemned. The resultant effect is that all the education and socialization that formed the major component of initiation were discarded without replacement. With this, sexual morality among young people has been eroded to the detriment of the family institution. Although Christianity condemns premarital sex, it has not been as effective as the traditional societies were

because unlike traditional African religions, Christianity is not a way of life. The disparity between belief and practice is wide in Christianity.

A common practice in traditional Kenyan societies is polygamy that is plural marriage. Polygyny (one man with many wives) was most common but polyandry (one woman with many husbands) was not entirely absent. Within the polygynous system of marriage, the sexual needs of men could be met by his other wives if one could not have sex with him for such reasons as pregnancy or postpartum sex taboo. Polygamy also had the function of minimizing chances of promiscuity and prostitution. More importantly, polygamy had the function of satisfying the desire for large families while at the same time ensuring that individual women could space their births. The system also protected childless marital unions. For example, a barren woman could 'marry' another woman to get children for her with her husband.

In view of these functions, it would seem that polygamy was geared towards social order, harmony and societal perpetuation. As noted by Benzeri Kisembo:

*The institution of polygamy in traditional Africa was certainly not merely a means of satisfying male lust. It had a number of well-defined social functions and advantages, and it certainly helped to stabilize the institution of marriage to integrate the family with society.*

This indicates the importance of polygamy in traditional African societies. Closely related to polygamy though quite different is levirate union which is erroneously referred to as wife inheritance. Within this system, a man could meet the sexual and procreative needs of his brother's widow or of widows of other close kinsmen. This practice is still common among the Luo of Western Kenya in contemporary time. But it was prevalent in nearly all Kenyan traditional societies. Among the Kikuyu it was referred to as guthambia (literally translated, it means cleansing).

There were other socio-cultural practices and values that served similar purposes. Among the Kikuyu for example, it was acceptable for a woman to invite her husband's age mate(s) to sleep with her for some part of the night. Indeed, every woman was expected to have at least one child with a man other than her husband in case the children with her legal husband had generic disorders. This explains why every Kikuyu man was expected to once in a while go out late into the night and why every Kikuyu homestead had a Githaku (specially built corridor). This is where a man who slept in another man's house could hide when he heard the owner of the house coming. Note

that the owner of the house was always expected to announce his coming with a loud cough or with loud singing.

With the coming of Christianity, all these practices and value systems of familial and societal organizations were condemned as heathen and sinful. According to the Missionary Conference of 1910 held in Edinburgh, polygamy is “one of the gross evils of heathen society which like the habitual murder of slavery must at all costs be ended”. In equating polygamy to murder and slavery, mission Christianity presented polygamy as an intrinsic evil. Many Kenyan convertees to Christianity discarded the practice without thinking about its functions and how it could be supplemented. In later years, Christianity developed to equate polygamy and other traditional sexual practices to adultery and later to, as referred to by the Second Vatican Council, a disfigurement of marriage’. To date, Christianity condemns polygamy, and many Kenyans claiming to be Christians abhor the practice.

The resultant effect of Christian condemnation of initiation, polygamy, leviratic unions and other traditional practices and values related to the family is family disintegration and disorder. This coupled with modernization and globalization which exposes young people to modern lifestyles which seem to encourage sexual immorality makes it even more difficult. Both the press media and the audio-visual media present unfaithfulness and sexual activity before marriage as a norm. For example, the on-going soap opera on Kenya Broadcasting Corporation “The Bold and the Beautiful” which is a favourite among youth presents incest and infidelity as norms.

Due to unmet sexual needs (both educative and practical) young people are increasingly becoming sexually active sometimes with multiple partners. The effects are there for all to see: unwanted pregnancies, abortions, stress and sexually transmitted diseases included the incurable HIV/AIDS. This has been disastrous for many families.

Due to unmet sexual needs, sexual promiscuity and prostitution are on the increase. A new form of polygamy is developing where extra marital sex is rife. This has, in turn, led to separations, desertions and divorce. Widows and childless marriages are no longer taken care of. For example, more and more people are exposed as being barren, with all the psycho-social implications associated with this.

Christianity has certain sexual values but these are rarely adhered to. Mostly, this is because of the fact that it is possible in Christianity to differentiate between faith and a people’s way of life. This is unlike in traditional Kenyan societies where to live was to be religious; traditional religions were ways of life. Religion was completely integrated into all



departments of life in a way that it was impossible to differentiate between what is religious and what is secular.

Like Margaret Thatcher (earlier quoted in this paper) many governments of the world recognize that family welfare is central to national development. In view of the effect of social change on the family in Kenya, one would want to know what policies the government of Kenya has formulated and implemented to help the family cope with this crisis. To this, we now turn.

### **Some Government Family Policies in Kenya**

Collin Murray defines government family policy as “the goals set by the government for family wellbeing or as achievements gained by government enactments on behalf of the family”. This implies government recognition that citizens belong to individual families which need government support. Some family policies are explicit in the sense that they are aimed directly at family welfare. Others are implicit in that they are not designed to directly promote the family: they are designed to accomplish other goals, but in the process benefit the family.

The Kenya government has specific explicit family policies. One of them that are related to reproduction and socialization is the family planning and population policy. This policy presupposes that decline in fertility is positively related to socio-economic development. Family planning and childcare are the major services provided in this policy. All government hospitals all over the country have the Mother Child Health / Family Planning (MCH/FP) Clinics.

In spite of all these clinics and in spite of Kenya having been the first Sub-Saharan African country to officially adopt family planning as a development strategic the prevalence of family planning is less than 5% among people of childbearing age. Thirty years after official government implementation of the policy, not much has been achieved. This policy does not seem to have significantly affected people's perceptions and practice in line with the implications of modernization and globalization.

Another government policy in Kenya is on the family legal system of childcare and custody, and marital violence, among others. In spite of this legal system, cases of marital violence, for example, continue to increase. The law against marital violence is largely unrealistic as there are no specific procedures or guidelines on the law. Moreover, the law is not enforced. The family in Kenya therefore continues to suffer this evil.

For a long time now, the government has been trying to introduce family life education in her formal education system. This has not been possible due to opposition especially from the Roman Catholic Church and the Supreme

Council of Muslims in Kenya. Yet, young people continue to suffer due to sex educational needs.

Government policies on the family remain inadequate and theoretical. Some of those already implemented are unrealistic, for example, the family legal system which does not provide favourable situations for women to report on cases of marital violence. Others such as the family life education need more political will power. Yet others need to be reviewed in order to serve Kenyans with regard to such realities as socio-economic situations.

### **The Mission of the Church and the Family in Kenya**

The Church which may be defined as an institution or community of believers whose model is Jesus Christ is numerically the largest single religious group in Kenya. Jesus Christ had a major mission to the world and this is the mission of the Church regardless of time or place:

*to bring good news to the poor to proclaim liberty to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed and to announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people.*

J.N.K. Mugambi interprets this to mean that the mission of Christ and therefore of the Church is to liberate humankind on the socio-political and economic plane and to lead them to salvation on the eschatological plane.

For the family in Kenya, the Church has a mission to provide good news in the midst of the crisis and the threats that this poses to the family institution. First and foremost, the Church in Kenya has to re-establish the central place of the family in society. This is necessary, if appropriate strategies for survival and development of the family and, thereby, of the entire society are to be ensured. The Church can do this by educating her faithful on the importance of the family unit to social organization and development. It would seem that the Church is caught up in a crisis that is similar to that affecting the family. With the rising up of new religious movements, Churches are disintegrating into smaller units with opposing values and teachings. Nevertheless, the Church remains the most effective institution, in terms of instilling familial order and harmony.

On youth sexual behaviour which is a major threat to the family in Kenya, the Church has a mission to educate young people on their sexuality. It would seem that there is need to supplement sex education that used to be given to young people over initiation. As has already been noted, the government has recognized this need and has tried to introduce sex education in school



curricula. The Church, in particular the Roman Catholic Church, has rightly argued that the sex education syllabus needs to be redesigned to include an emphasis on the moral component of education. But the Church has to go beyond this and possibly design an acceptable curriculum. This writer appreciates that the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) has designed a family life education program. This, however, is not designed for integration into either primary or secondary schools' curricula. The Church should move beyond this and take action towards full implementation of a sex education program in Kenyan schools. If the Kenyan government is not willing to implement such a curriculum, the Church could introduce it in her schools which make up a significant proportion of all schools in Kenya.

An important point to remember is that not all youth are in school. The church should therefore initiate sex education programs which target out-of-school youth. Besides education, young people need practical solutions to their sexual health needs. The Church has a mission to come up with pastoral innovations and initiatives to address such consequences of premarital sex as pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

Further, the Church should seek to make Christianity a way of life; something that is lived rather than a set of beliefs which are not necessarily practiced. In spite of Christianity's condemnation of premarital sex, adultery and other practices that threaten the family many people claiming to be Christians engage in these.

More than this the Church has a mission to offer hope for families in Kenya. With the high rate of separations and divorces, one may feel that the family is at the verge of collapse. The family is passing through a grave crisis but this will not necessarily lead to its collapse. This writer concurs with Margaret Sawin that the family in any part of the world is going through an important transitory stage which will

*result in what is perhaps the greatest evolution leap since families began. Many people looking at this transition feel that the family is being destroyed. I believe that the Changes we see are the growth pangs of new possibilities compatible with our new knowledge of how people can be.*

When we reflect on the crisis facing the family in Kenya, we may feel overwhelmed and pessimistic. But Christianity offers hope. Christ promises to renew the face of the earth. The Church has a mission to facilitate this renewal.

## Conclusion

This paper presents a brief situation analysis of the family in Kenya with specific reference to the impact of Christianity on the procreative and socialization functions of the family. The major issue arising is that Christianity destroyed some of the main family structures, values and processes without replacing them. Since these structures, values and processes served specific purposes in terms of familial order and harmony, the family in Kenya is now facing many problems. These have been worsened by the process of modernization and globalization. Some of these problems include disintegration and family breakups.

Some government policies on the family are presented in a bid to show how the government of Kenya has tried to help the family face the current crisis. What comes out clear is that the government has not put as much effort as it should in protecting the family. More policies could be formulated and implemented while current ones could be made more effective.

Ironically, the major institution with the potential of making significant contribution towards saving the family in Kenya from possible collapse is, in the opinion of this writer, the Church. Thus, a section of the paper is devoted to the mission of the church specifically, in providing sex education to young people, educating the general public on the importance of the family unit and in giving people hope that the family will not only survive the future crisis but will come out more refined.

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## Political Party Cooperation in Post-election as Ethnic Tensions (Kenyan Case)

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### Abstract

*In most African states, general elections generate a lot of ethnic tensions. This is because most parties are ethnic-based or receive support from certain ethnic groups. When a party loses in an election, it is excluded from the government and the ethnic group that supported it suffers reprisals, its members are even victimized in the civil service, parastatals and other state backed institutions. This attitude has generated more tensions and conflicts.*

*This paper attempts to give suggestions on how post-election tensions can be minimized in plural societies. Kenya will be taken to show that party cooperation between KANU, NDP and Ford Kenya has created coexistence of the ethnic groups that supported such parties. The paper also evaluates the impact of party cooperation in the future of multiparty politics in Kenya. The paper also draws examples from other countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa to show the merits of party cooperation in defusing would-be conflicts.*

*The 1990s has witnessed a new wave of political dispensation in Africa. After practicing a one-party political system for three decades, the beginning of this decade witnessed the adoption of a multiparty system. It was hoped then that political competition between parties would usher in a government that observed transparency and accountability devoid of corruption and misgovernance. The clarion call then was for a change of guards at the helm. However, in many countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe, the ruling parties regained their leadership. In other states like Zambia and Malawi, new leaders took over but brought in minimal changes. Most of these countries have conducted two multiparty elections and the aftermath of elections has led to the evolution of a new philosophy and attitude towards the future government. The new approach seems to be geared towards political party cooperation or the formation of a government of national unity.*

*In Kenya, after the second multiparty election in December 1997, political party cooperation has been the in thing. This is a new concept in African political thought, and possibly a political practice that is likely to dominate politics in the 21st century. It is a political philosophy that has capacity to ease tensions between various cooperating ethnic*

groups. It is a political concept based on mutual cooperation between the ruling party and one or two opposition parties. The cooperation does not eliminate complete opposition politics.

The concept of cooperation as practiced in Kenya by the Kenya African National Union (KANU) the ruling party and National Development Party (NDP) the third largest party in parliament also implies that there is concerted effort to reconcile the Kalenjin group (dominating KANU leadership) and the Luo community dominating NDP.

The cooperation concept is a few steps below the realization of the government of National Unity as practiced in South African and royal oppositions in United Kingdom. In the case, the government of National Unity is constituted in the constitution. The constitutional arrangement gives the parties with 5% of the national vote, a legal framework and obligation to participate in the government. In this regard, the members take ministerial posts in government. In the British system, the royal opposition party is the officially recognized opposition party. In the Kenyan case, the official opposition is the Democratic Party. (DP) of Mwai Kibaki former Vice-President. His party is the real opposition to the ruling party and the cooperating parties. DP seems to have adopted an old adage of "a friend of my enemy is my enemy". The DP on the other hand is rightly or wrongly accused of representing the aspiration of the Kikuyu, the largest ethnic group in Kenya. Fear of Kikuyu domination of the political landscape has forced other ethnic groups to organize opposition against them with the aim of neutralizing them. Very few ethnic groups are willing to cooperate politically with the Kikuyu since they are known to be Kikuyu-centric, when it comes to general elections. They support wholeheartedly one of their own without fearing repercussions in case of losing. It is almost certain that the cooperation between KANU and NDP is simply to frustrate DP in parliament and in national politics.

Another aspect of political cooperation and which makes it unique is that, it lacks the tenets of coalition government. In most coalition governments, the parties involved share ministerial posts in the government. They have a common policy and support one another in parliament. Political cooperation is like marriages of convenience between the political leaders. It does not also imply that the members of parliament belonging to a cooperating party have any obligation to support the other party. What has emerged is that there is serious lobbying between members before a stand is taken. Through the cooperation mechanism, the government has been able to defeat serious motions like votes of no confidence on the presidency, and secured election of KANU candidate as Speaker of National Assembly, and that NDP candidate as Deputy Speaker against DP and Ford Kenya candidates.

As noted earlier, the political party cooperation is not enshrined in the constitution nor is it included in party constitutions. As a result, the cooperating parties do not take ministerial posts but the leaders have been able to pull the strings behind the scene have members of their ethnic groups appointed to lucrative positions in the government and in key parastatals. This has been seen as the direct benefit of cooperation. In this regard the ethnic groups participating in cooperation have realized tangible benefits from the political venture. The government has gone for the best in Luo community in effecting the policy. In fact, the

*candidates' promotion in many cases was overdue because of lack of political goodwill. Such talented peoples were victimized because of the politics of exclusion of those communities that did not sing the tune of the ruling party.*

### **What has necessitated this political cooperation?**

Secondly, I think, from the outset, it is important to recognize that politics is the game of the possible. Two, in politics you maximize your gains using all the available avenues. Thirdly, a good politician should be able to gauge the feelings of the masses and be in a position to exploit those feelings for his advantage. Fourthly, there are no permanent enemies in politics. How do these three factors come in to interplay in Kenyan Politics?

Kenyans, in general, have come to realize that beating President Moi in general election is an uphill task. He has rightly called himself the Professor of Kenyan Politics. It is true, Moi is the most experienced politician in Kenya, having joined active politics in 1955 (44 years ago) as a nominated member of legislative council. Since that time, he has never left parliament. At the time of independence, he was the Chairman of Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) which came to be the main opposition party in post-independent Kenya. Out of political expediency and need 'for unity in 1964, KADU members of parliament crossed the floor and joined KANU (the ruling party from 1963 to present). From 1967, he was appointed Vice President by President Kenyatta and served for eleven years until Kenyatta died in August. 1987. He easily assumed the presidency in 1978. He has ruled Kenya a president for twenty-one years. This is no mean experience. What has enabled him to rule Kenya is the divide-and-rule policy. Throughout his tenure, he has seen political giants' tumble, enabling him to groom youthful politicians ready to sing his tune. It would seem that the cooperation is based on the realization that you can only succeed by joining Moi's bandwagon. By cooperating, the leader of NDP, Raila Odinga has received high profile in the corridors of power. He can travel easily without harassment by provincial administration. Though out the country through this system, he has been able to create his political niche that is likely to bear political dividends, come the next general elections in 2002.

What possibly has puzzled friend and foe is why Raila of all Kenyan politicians could agree to cooperate. Economic niceties that go with cooperation cannot be enough political carrot to entice Raila, given the fact that the Odinga family is not poor. The family has also external connections for financial support. The cooperation with Moi would have been inconceivable bearing in mind that Raila has been put in jail and detention by



the Moi regime. It should be noted that during the struggle for a multiparty political system, he was severely beaten and harassed. In Kenyan politics it was only Raila who could organize violence to count KANU violence. To many he was the only leader who could give Moi sleepless nights when it came to underground organization. Raila, a Russian trained engineer, was an embodiment of a real fighter of rights of Kenyans and few Kenyans could not comprehend his decision. It was hoped that the cooperation would enable a Luo to ascend to power through Moi's support. How this will be possible is a matter of time as the year 2002 approaches for the third multiparty elections and intensification of Moi's succession debate. If the promise of Kalenjin support will be forthcoming, then Raila will be able to have an extra political constituency that could enable him realize his political dream.

So far the Luo masses seem to be happy with Raila's move. High profile haram bees have been held in Luo Nyanza by KANU heavy weights to raise bursary funds for Luo children. The first fruit of cooperation was election of Joab Omino as Deputy Speaker, followed by the appointment of Peter Raburu as Provincial Commissioner. Other appointments have been effected in the Foreign Office and in key parastatals. The move has ended Luo isolation by Kenyan government which started from 1966 when Raila's father Oginga Odinga formed the Kenya Peoples Union (KPU), making him the doyen of Kenyan opposition politics. This new move by Raila is definitely going to enable him to solidify his political base in Nyanza as a leader who can deliver what the Luos need. The greatest economic benefit is the initiation of the Sondu Mimu Hydroelectric power station with ten micro projects to benefit the Luo. The project had been planned for a long time but there was no political will, to implement it. The project will offer job opportunities to the youth and control the flooding of rivers Nyando and Sondu. Without political cooperation, these benefits would not have been extended to the community. Such sectarian politics have been a great hindrance to the practice of democracy and equitable allocation of national resources to all communities.

### **How has political cooperation eased ethnic tensions**

With the introduction of multiparty politics, Kenyans experienced ethnic conflicts (clashes) in the Rift Valley and the neighbouring ethnic groups namely, the Luo, Luhyas, Kisii and Kikuyu. The clashes were triggered by the fear that the Kalenjin would suffer if Moi was defeated. The above-named communities apart from the Gussi, were the most vocal on the Moi must go clarion call, which characterized the 1990-92 campaign for multiparty democracy. After the two elections (1991 and 1997) these fears seem to have

been misplaced. There is a realization that welders and communities can cooperate for the common good. There is also realization that ethnic conflicts are very costly in terms of manpower and resources. The wielders of state power also seem to realize that the problems of internal conflicts in the face of economic hardships are dangerous, hence the need to respond to those issues that cause conflicts.

There seems to be an understanding among the political elite that the roots of conflicts lie with African States' failure to respond to Africans heterogeneous social realities. The failure to recognize the need to coexist has made government to spend a lot of resources to maintain sycophants, police and military forces for use to quell internal strife. In the long run, autocratic regimes were retained through they were unable to deliver basic services to the people or foster economic development. The system widened the gap between the state and African societies. The state saw some communities as enemies of the state which bred opposition with strong indigenous base (ethnic-based). However, with acute national poverty, the government had neither the capacity to wage war nor they money to alleviate grievances that contributed to the internal clashes. Due to this the state had to initiate cooperation to minimize expenditure and in the long run, it would be in a position to hide her inability to contain unrest. This also means that the government can rely on cooperating communities to check the pressures from dissenting groups. In this cooperating system, councils of elders are formed to advise the youth on the need to be peaceful.

The lack of opportunities for the Luo in the past intensified their opposition. There were no tangible promotions in the civil service and in parastatals. Such discrimination tended to show them that they had no stake in the Kenyan State. The denial of opportunity and impoverishment of the Luo community linked by primordial ties undoubtedly contributed to the strength of societal resistance to the state. However, with the few gains so far attained, their militancy seems to have been tamed as they hope for more. In future, on the other hand, the leaders are not interested in revenge or even remembering the dark past or in power for its own sake but in a better life for themselves, their children, right to be heard and a political system firmly based on the onset of the government and more responsive to their needs. I think this is a virtue to be emulated where leaders have victory over self and aspire for the wider good of the society. The main cause of conflicts is selfishness on the part of leaders, and lack of capacity and freedom to forgive their enemies. Most leaders in Africa think that by settling scores with opponents makes them heroes. It would be important to learn that there is victory for those who strive for reconciliation.

In other words, political leaders in the political divide should be sensitive to any avenues that could offer reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. Conflicting aspirations and interests, if they are truly recognized and faced, can lead to acceptable compromise. Genuine love demands justice in human relationships that can only be attained by honesty, which is likely to be painful. The leaders in cooperation have to subordinate their ego for the sake of the nation. The main hindrance to cooperation is hypocrisy on the part of leaders or what has come to be popularly known in Kenyan politics as the hidden agenda. Openness would be the greatest virtue for healing the mistrust that has clouded the three decades of political practice in Africa. This notion confirms perfectly alexander Herzen's contention that "only the strong acknowledges his fault, only the strong is humble, only the strong forgives and indeed only the strong laughs, though often his laughter is equal to tears". (Badin; 1981:141)

The lesson learnt so far is that the masses are peaceful and obedient. The leaders are responsible for peace or conflicts experienced in the society. If leaders can cooperate at the national level and translate the cooperation into tangible gains, the masses will not fight. However, the failure by leaders to cooperate makes the likelihood of inciting their ethnic followers very high.

### **Political party cooperation and opposition politics in Kenya**

There is fear among reformist politicians that political party cooperation will not augur well for political development in Kenya. These politicians believe that all stakeholders can only reform the Moi regime through concerted effort and that cooperation with him enables him to mark time on the constitutional reform process. Secondly, members of the opposition argue that cooperation waters down the whole essence of opposition politics whose objective is to keep the government on its toes. However, what has come out of the cooperation is members' awareness of the right to criticize the government an equal footing with backbenchers belonging to the ruling party. Equally important, is the realization that the cooperating party can advise the government in secret and in confidence to thwart would be crisis in the country.

### **Observation and Conclusion**

In the absence of a formal coalition government in most African states, the adoption of political party cooperation is a mechanism that is likely to ease ethnic tension in many plural societies. This is based on political party

formations in Africa, where they draw a major following from ethnic groups; thus, political party cooperation implies ethnic cooperation between the members forming the parties.

It should be noted that political party cooperation based on ethnic following might translate into the exclusion of the non-cooperative parties and, by extension non-cooperating ethnic groups. The system (if not handled carefully could create conflicts between the ethnic groups forming the political divide. The main danger of this cooperation is that non-cooperating regions are likely to be victimized despite the fact that they are entitled to development. It would be too unfair for the government to forfeit her responsibility in national development in favour of certain regions. Possibly, it would make political sense, if resources were extended to non-ruling party zones as an attempt to woo opponents.

To crown it all, political stability and easing of ethnic tension has been realized in those nations that leaders have been able to cooperate like in South Africa and Zimbabwe. .

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## Gender and the Debates on Ethnicity in Africanist Anthropology: Inclusion in the Third Millennium

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### Introduction

Maama Laila, an Islamized Mafa woman explains:

*I had several husbands.*

*The first one had been chosen for me by my father [in the mountains]. It was the father of Daada Laila (her daughter). I got two children with him, one of them died, and then I left him<sup>24</sup>. I remarried with somebody else. We stayed together for twelve years without having children. Then I left him. People told me that it was my first husband who caused this [her sterility during this period].*

*My first husband had said: "She will only get more children if she returns to me. If not she will never have children any more". So I wanted to return to my first husband but my father said, "Ashe lied and raised the bride wealth, I do not want you to return to him".*

*So after I left my second husband, I Islamized. They brought me to the Marabout; I left the house, with the clothes I was wearing at that time. I would not return again in those clothes. I knew that when the marabout would wash me, he would take those old clothes and that he would give me other new clothes. He showed me how I should wash my hands, my feet, how I should pray and how I should wash my face, how I should put water into my mouth twice (!) and then start praying ... that's all Islamized.*

*I decided to Islamize because I was angry. My second husband had told me, 'As you do not get any children, it is better that you return to your first husband who has said that your sterility is caused by him, otherwise when you get old, you will blame me for the fact that you do not have any children and that I did not let you go. "But when I left to return to my first husband, my brother too stopped me. He said: "You cannot go back to him, because he lied and raised the bride wealth". Then I said: 'All right, if it is like that, I will become Muslim and in that way none of you will have any say over me anymore'. If we [women] Islamize men do not have any influence any more.*

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<sup>24</sup>Thereupon the former husband, the new husband and the father of the woman needed to negotiate which part of the bride wealth ought to be returned to the former husband.

The woman in the example that I gave above is one among many Mafa women in North Cameroon, who exchanged her own religion for Islam<sup>25</sup>. The process of Islamization in the mountainous area where the Mafa live, started in the nineteenth century. The initial nomadic Fulbe have played a dominant role in this process. Uthman dan Fodio, founder of the large Sokoto Empire came from this dispersed ethnic group, which can be found throughout West Africa. He inspired his people to undertake the jihad. From that time onwards the Fulbe have claimed Islam as their ethnic marker and engendered many learned Islamic scholars. Islamized groups adopt their interpretation of Islam, without realizing that some of their new customs were not Islamic but remnants from pre-Islamic Fulbe culture. Consequently the process of Islamization means a radical change of lifestyle. Recently, a process of purification of Islam has been taking place, whereby Islam gets more detached from Fulbe values. I call this process 'Islamism' (van Santen 1999). In this paper I will first concentrate on the construction of Mafa ethnic identity in the particular cultural and political context of North Cameroon. It is a context in which Islamic characteristics were dominant for nearly two centuries, but in which local ethnic groups now assert their own identity.

The Twentieth Century saw the ascendancy of European definitions of ethnic groups, ideas derived from biological notions and ideas about consanguinity. A mixture of nationalism and ethnic politics gave rise to (violent) claims that national culture, ethnic groups and territorial boundaries ought to coincide. The prevailing thought was that the nation-state has the legitimate right to deny access to all persons who are considered to be "strangers". Ethnic groups in North Cameroon do not apply this Western notion of consanguinity to define their own ethnic group (Schilder 1994; van Santen and Schilder 1994). Until recently, the Mafa felt that the introduction of alien cultural practices and/or genetic mixing did not necessarily affect their ethnic identity. The same applies to the Fulbe. One may wonder what then did define the boundaries of Mafa identity and how the notion about their ethnic identity has been changed by the penetration of Islam and the process of

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<sup>25</sup>Elsewhere, I extensively described the process of Islamisation in the once inaccessible area of the Mandara Mountains (Van Santen 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996). That is, the historical context and the cultural features that produced - what Appadurai refers to as - the actors...who properly belong to the situated community of kin, neighbors, friends and enemies ... (Appadurai 1996: 179), who in the course of this century came to be known as the Mafa. I analyzed the changes that conversion to Islam brought about in the relations between the genders. I depicted how Mafa women integrated the cultural features of the Fulbe people in their new lifestyle - and especially what this meant for women's position, and drew some conclusions concerning Mafa women's strategies in general (van Santen 1993 a & b: 1995a: 1996 a & b: 1998b: van Santen en Schilder 1994).



Islamization that thereafter followed. I will deal with these topics with a focus on their relation with gender.

Recent literature devotes much attention to changes in identity (Appadurai 1990; 1996; van Binsbergen 1994; Hannerz 1996; Featherstone 1990; Eade 1997). The relation of gender and Islam is a topic of continual debate within feminist circles (see e.g.: L. Ahmed 1991; 1992; Al-Hibri 1982; Kandiyoti 1991; Mernissi 1991; Sanders 1991), and the position of Muslim women in the global process does get some attention (Weiss 1994; Watson 1994). In general, however the genderedness of ethnicity or the process of changing identity has been much less discussed. This is rather surprising since gender identities and relations always infiltrate cultural differences and social inequalities, as well as the ethnic manifestations of the latter. Elsewhere (van Santen en Schilder 1994: 131), we have acknowledged the interweaving of gender and ethnicity in connection with different levels of reproduction. In a patrilineal system, boundaries of social group cohesion and social differences between the group and 'other' groups are often constructed through the women. On the other hand, in a matrilineal system, these boundaries will hardly ever be established through the men. Religion, identity, ethnicity and gender are undeniably related, as I will try to show in this paper. If the reality of (constructed) gender differences would be taken more seriously in different societies, so I plead, the study on ethnic identity or land ethnic clashes in Africa, would enormously gain insights. Though I take the case of the Mafa as an example to show how studies on ethnicity in Africa should consider the genderedness of ethnic constructions, it can generally be applied to other areas as Schilder has shown for the Mundang (van Santen and Schilder 1994<sup>26</sup>).

Before discussing the mentioned themes and relating them to the North Cameroonian context, I will define gender as I think it should be used in the context of the discussion of ethnicity.

## Gender

Gender has become, so it seems, a common concept, accepted and recognized by many scientists and all too easily applied. A simple definition tells us that gender is about the cultural consequences of physical, anatomical and biological differences between female and male human species. Or, as Scott puts it, feminists have in a more literal and serious vein began to use gender as a way of referring to the social organization of the relationship between the sexes (Scott 1991: 13). The flight the concept has taken in recent

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<sup>26</sup>Many ideas used in this paper were worked out in cooperation with Kees Schilder, and some of them were used in an article written by us in Dutch (1994).

years has not always been in the interest of the female perspective in science. Gender too easily stands for the relation between women and men, without any analytical implications for reflection upon the precise content of these relations and its consequences for the identity of women and men in specific cultural and/or ethnic contexts (see also van Santen & Willemse 1999).

To understand gender relations in the North Cameroonian context, I try to use the concept in a more analytical sense. I have divided the concept of gender using Moore (1994), Braidotti (1993), Scott (1991) and Willemse (forthcoming) as well as Willemse's analytical insights (oral communication) into three levels (van Santen 1997).

Gender symbolism (Scott 1991: 18) or the difference between women and men (Braidotti 1993: 20), and female and male identities which are constituted in the process of cultural reproduction (I will come back to this point later on). Every local environment has a dominant gender ideology. This consists of ideas about how women and men ought to behave, how they differ, but also about how female and male are defined as categories. In most studies, the two poles of the female/male opposition are analysed in an asymmetrical relationship (van Santen 1983; 1984; 1991). Accordingly 'woman' (or the female category) is too easily regarded as the 'other than' category and not as a self-regulating rational agent, who shapes and constructs that same society (Braidotti 1993: 20). In our context, it means that we readily assume that women of different ethnic groups adjust to the patriarchal institutions and representations of their local neighbourhoods or societies.

If we translate this analytical level for Mafa society, we ascertain that the most central ritual is performed for twins, male as well as female. The father needs to continue this ritual during his entire life and his first daughter needs to be present, even when she is married. I considered the associated symbols within this ritual to be the pillar of Mafa symbolic order; twins are thought to be the ultimate manifestation of the 'double person' (divine principle) that every human being is oneself and one's tutelary spirit (Van Santen 1993 a). Not only twins but also women as a category are associated with the number 'two', with evenness and as the twins with the primordial past. When the symbols that became evident from the twin rituals are brought into connection with the bull ritual - a ritual in the interest of the patriarchal structure the outcome is striking; it is interspersed with the structuring principle of two. In other words, a balance between unevenness (masculinity) and evenness (femininity), a balance between the here-and-now-society and the primordial past, or male and female categorization, is pursued. .

Gender structure (Scott 1991: 18) or the differences among women and among men (Braidotti 1993:23): This level is concerned with the way rights

and duties within a society are divided between women and men and among women. Further it is concerned with particular social and economic positions of women and men, the sexual division of labour, how local communities perceive the differences between female and male members and the effects of these views in daily life. At this level, we can situate and try to understand the differences between women of various ethnic groups and how they identify and shape their female identity<sup>27</sup>.

For example: the Mafa marriage system is strictly clan exogamous and ethnically endogamous. In their religious life, libations of millet beer in honour of the local God, Jigile play an important role. Another eminent feature of Mafa religion is the personal jar individual children, women as well as men, possess. It represents the tutelary spirit of every human being. Men make sacrifices to Jigile and other minor gods in the interest and welfare of the community; women only sacrifice to their personal tutelary spirit. From the analysis of the Mafa religious system, it became clear that married men perform sacrifices, but the female presence - that is of his wives; in religious activities is indispensable (van Santen 1993 a: 118 a.f.). Women are, literally, muted attendants. A second (even, so female numbering) son plays a special role in a father's life, as he should attend offerings and ceremonial gatherings. The status of an adult man is derived from having a compound of his own. An adult woman's status is derived from her children and her ability to work hard. Division of labour is not very rigid. Men and women work the fields of millet and peanuts together, though women do cultivate specific crops (beans, melons) as well as the men (tobacco).

Individual gender (Scott 1991: 18) or the difference within each woman or within each man (Braidotti 1993:28): In feminist scientific literature there has been much debate about difference and equality between women and between women and men (see also Moore 1988; 1994). In every cultural or local context, specific women and men have a certain idea about the gender roles they are supposed to play. Every individual has her or his own way of acting out and identifying with these roles. Thus, women and men are 'actors' with multiple identities, roles and levels of experience, using different aspects of the gender ideology of the cultural surroundings they live in. A woman can act out a role as director, as mistress, as mother or/and as daughter, and according to her individual character. In each of these roles, she acts out part of a gender role related to a clear or specific gender ideology.

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<sup>27</sup>Besides, as Braidotti stated, the notion of Woman refers to a female sexed subject that is constituted through a process of identification with culturally available positions organized in the dichotomy of gender (Braidotti 1993:24).

For example, in Mafa society a basic gender relation is that between father and daughter. This becomes evident during the bull ritual when the eldest girl has a special role in the celebration: She dances with a stone in her hand, symbolizing the particular part of the meat she is entitled to as her share of her father's bull. Harvest rituals and other festivities that take place in Mafa society underscore the importance of the patrilineage for sons as well as for daughters. The father goes over to his son-in-law to drink the beer his daughter has prepared. It is a symbolic repetition of an earlier event: people drank beer when they agreed upon the bride wealth. It is the daughter's importance that leads to a special relation with the in-laws in this virilocal society. The husband's clan, *gwali*, who is bride taker, owes respect to the wife's patrician, called *kuyuk*, the bride givers and needs to be present for all sorts of occasions. For example during a man's funeral in-laws need to attend as well (van Santen 1995 b). Nevertheless, there is a deep distrust towards the members of wives' clans, and also for the *kuyuk* in general, which accentuates the fact that relation between spouses is a far less prominent gender relation. Another important gender relation (related to the land tenure system), exists between a mother and a son.

All this made me (1993 a) conclude that in Mafa society relations between the genders on a symbolic level are fundamentally symmetrical and interdependent. On a social level, relations between fathers and daughters and mothers and sons are more important than relations between spouses. On an individual level a Mafa woman's identity is composed of her role as a daughter, as a first or second wife and/or as a mother, and as a sister.

In all societies gender entails more than the relations between adult women and men as spouses. Gender also includes the relations between brothers and sisters, between fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, and the relation between male and female as a category. All these levels determine consciously and unconsciously the boundaries of what are considered to be female and male behaviour in ethnic contexts (van Santen 1998 b; van Santen & Willemsen 1999; van Santen en Schaafsma, forthcoming). According to Scott, the referents for all three meanings (levels) of masculinity and femininity differ from culture to culture, though within any culture the three forms of gender are related to each other (Scott 1991: 18). In the North Cameroonian context, it became evident that these meanings (levels) are also related within different cultural settings. Mafa women exchange the level of gender symbolism and gender structure after Islamization as part of an individual strategy to improve their life, though their individual level partly remains the same. Hence, these meanings (levels) can be exchanged among cultures and should never be analysed too rigidly. Initially in Mafa society a religious alternative appeared

which made it possible for women to identify themselves with another community hence another gender identity. In a globalizing world, women as acting subjects can (and do) identify with an increasing range of female identities.

### **Mafa ethnic identity - the cultural explanation**

There have been quite some discussions, as has been the case for many other 'ethnic' groups in Africa, on how exactly ethnic boundaries of the Mafa ought to be defined<sup>28</sup>.

The Mafa could only with difficulty be distinguished on the basis of criteria like language, religion, production process or an ascribed criteria like a 'shared' culture. These criteria were often used to distinguish ethnic groups in the colonial context and is briefly referred to as the 'cultural explanation' of ethnicity (Geertz 1963). In this approach, ethnicity is directly related to a culture, that is 'God-given', meaning ascriptive and irreversible. For individual members of a particular group it concerns a tie of primordial attachments (Geertz 1963; Horowitz 1985).

Neighbouring groups of the Mafa (Mofu, Kapsiki, Daba etc.) have more or less the same features (Martin 1970: 15), but are from this 'cultural explanation' part of view, culturally divided. Podlewski pointed out a socio-demographic criterion that in our discussion may prove significant. He mentioned the endogamous marriage system, though within their group, the

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<sup>28</sup>It is not clear when people invaded the mountains. The area has probably been inhabited since Neolithic times, as tools from this period have been found. Despite this evidence we cannot speculate' on the autochthonous character of the inhabitants (Martin 1970: 25). Many migration movements took place before Fulbe hegemony. Martin considers that in the seventeenth century, the different ethnic groups [the French distinguished: like the Tschede, Fai, Daba, Guidar, Guisiga, Kapsiki, Motu and Matakam] probably lived in juxtaposition without hegemony of one specific group. In the founding history of various groups within Mafa society as well as within other ethnic groups, the Gudur massif, lying south-east of Mokolo (in present day, what is called, Mofu-territory) at the limits of the Diamare plains, is the epicenter and is considered sacred. It is the source of the river Tsanaga (Boisseau and Soula 1974).

In the literature the Mafa were referred to as Matakam (Lavergne 1949; Martin 1970; Podlewski 1966; Name used in Colonial archives and censuses). Lavergne mentioned (1949; 1990) that the term Matakam came from the Fulbe, who

**Les ait traitées de Mettayamen, pluriel de Mettayamjo, terme méprisant réserve aux âtres que la nature n'a pas favorises, l'absence de vêtements étant pour les Peulhs un signe évident de pauvreté, de manque de dignité et d'infériorité. Cela se passé vers 1850 (Lavergne 1949; 1990; also Martin 1970: 16).**

Mettayam became Mettakam or Matakam and with that name one first indicated the mountains and afterwards also the 'tribes' that inhabited those mountains. The Mafa themselves loathe the term and consider it more and more as an insult.

Mafa are clan exogamous. He remarked that 95% of the “matrimonial exchanges”<sup>29</sup> of a group qualified by the same name take place within the group (Poslewski 1966). In spite of this qualification in the distant and recent past for the Mafa only clan cohesion was essential; clans regularly fought each other and ethnic Mafa identity only existed outside the area. However, in the course of the past centuries different clans and groups did mix on the basis of resettlement, migration and/or immigration<sup>30</sup>; features that cannot be explained by a ‘cultural explanation’.

### **Mafa ethnic identity, the ‘political explanation’**

Nowadays people north of the town of Mokolo and around the town of Koza, claim to be Mafa, and south of Mokolo, they will call themselves Mofuele (and not Matakam). They underline and express this identity in song, dance and other cultural performances within state-organized cultural events (see also: van Binsbergen 1992).

Until the beginning of this century, the different Mafa clans had resisted Fulbe domination. Their success was due to the inaccessibility of their mountainous habitat. The initial adjustment to Fulbe cultural elements came through Mafa people who had been taken into slavery, were Islamized and returned to their birth place when they were freed after the First World War (van Santen 1993a: 69101; 1995a; 1996a).

After this period, the imbalance of political and cultural power between Fulbe and an ‘autochthonous’ group such as the Mafa led to the development of boundaries. Until recently, the ‘cultural order’ of the Mafa clans could only be ‘lived’ in their own local environment. It had to be produced and maintained by specific religious practices and a great number of rituals (van Santen 1993a; 1995b). Mafa rituals and religion are unknown outside their own

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<sup>29</sup>In the light of our discussion, I use inverted commas for this term. The underlying idea is that women are “exchanged” as passive subjects. During my research, it became clear that they never have been (van Santen 1993: 257 ft.: Mafa marriage negotiations: the mother’s voice and the girl’s desire). Also in the course of this paper, it will become evident that women have their own strategies to escape patriarchal constructions. Of course, patriarchal raised anthropologists did not realize this and often are still unaware of their male bias.

<sup>30</sup>Lavergne (and Martin) distinguish within, what they call the Matakam, the group called Bouahay ( a regrouping Mafa and Mofu people after the latter had been chased from the massif named GudUl) , in the South and around Mokolo; the Mabass around the village with the same name; the Mafa clans like Hide, Ndare and Geebda, intermarried with Marghi immigrants who came from around Madagali (nowadays Nigeria) and settled near Tourou; the Mineo who intermarried with the Mafa around Roua in the West; and the Mafa, as the most important group in the center around Roua and Soulede (regrouped between the compromised massifs of the valleys of Tsanaga, Kerawa and the Madagali plateau after a triple oppression from the south, west and east in the former century) (Lavergne 1949; 1990: 8 ft.).



‘neighbourhood’ (Appadurai 1996: 184). For example, the Kapsiki, ethnic group living adjacent to the Mafa, joke about the many jars the Mafa possess. To the Mafa each one is necessary in order to perform sacrifices in honour of their ancestors and on behalf of the continuity of the clan. The Mafa in turn, consider the Kapsiki to be ‘bad’ husbands, who make ‘their’ women, do all the work on the field, treat them badly and do not even fetch water.

Due to the political situation, Mafa cultural features came to be regarded by the Mafa as being unique. This fact is in line with more ‘politically-minded explanations’ of ethnicity, like those of the so-called ‘Manchester School’<sup>31</sup>. According to these theories, social interactions of ethnic groups cannot be understood by simply looking at norms and values of societies. Micro political processes should be taken into consideration. Ethnicity is what people make of it in specific political circumstances and ethnic groups are not static or ‘God-given’, but situational. They are latent in some situations and manifest in others<sup>32</sup>.

Since the imposition of Fulbe hegemony in North Cameroon, the members of the diverse non-Islamic communities were not free to choose to either accept or reject the dominant Fulbe culture. In their societies, relations with the outside world could only be successful if the members adjusted to the norms of decency derived from the Fulbe Islamic groups. If they refused to do so, they were excluded from access to any position of power. The ceaseless political pressure forced the Mafa and other groups to continuously make new strategic choices. They had to keep assessing to what extent they wanted to identify with the cultural practices and identities of their ‘rulers’ or with those of their own local surroundings (see also Schilder 1995). Thus, they always gave much attention to cherishing and refining what they considered to be their own cultural features.

For the Mafa, Fulbe political domination and the ensuing process of Islamization have changed the boundaries of their identity and their definition of their own ethnic group. When, to use Horton’s terminology (1971; 1975) the boundaries of Mafa microcosm were opened up by the macrocosm of Islamic ideology, Mafa ethnic identity started to become as important as clan identity. The various migration movements during this century (van Santen 1995a; 1996a; 1998a; Schaafsma 1998; van Santen en Schaafsma forthcoming) and recent political developments (van Santen 1996a) also play a part in these changing notions. Expanding horizons are increasing their ethnic consciousness (van Santen 1997).

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<sup>31</sup>For example J.E. Mitchell (1956) or Epstein 1958. ,.

<sup>32</sup>Theorists denying the essentialist character of ethnicity are f.ex. Uchendu (1965).Kasfir (1976)



Stories about the first Islamic chief (lamido) of the town of Mokolo and his gruesome deeds towards the Mafa people are kept alive in the local community. At the same time, tales of how he and other Fulbe chiefs repressed the non-Fulbe population are manipulated by national political parties in order to win votes from the non-Islamic population and to oppose the UNDP (Union Nationale Pour le Developpement et le Progres).<sup>33</sup>

However, why the Mafa cherished some cultural features and disregarded others, cannot, on its own, be explained by an instrumental political model of explanation. As is generally the case, ethnicity in Mafa society has nothing to do with 'objective' cultural differences compared to other ethnic groups, but with ideas about cultural differences. Eminently present in these ideas - that are only partly related to a socio-cultural reality - are notions about gender differences and the roles the genders are supposed to play. In the paragraphs hereafter, I will mention some anthropological themes that are supposed to play a role in the construction of ethnicity and I will relate them to gender differences. I will again use the context of Mafa society to illustrate the different themes.

### **Ethnicity, kinship and gender**

In a patrilineal system, boundaries of social group cohesion and social differences between the group and 'other' groups are often constructed through the women.

I mentioned that the Mafa consider their neighbours, the Kapsiki, to be "women abusers". Consequently a father is unlikely to accept a Kapsiki as a son-in-law. However, he will act the same if his daughter wants to marry someone from a clan he has a disagreement with. Though young people choose their partners themselves, in dominant Mafa gender ideology fathers need to agree with their daughter's choice considering her 'first' husband. In reality, the mother will always support the daughter if the latter prefers to marry against her father's wish. I found out that below the surface, the mother has the most important role in the marriage negotiations (see van Santen 1993: 259).

In a matrilineal system, these boundaries will hardly ever be established through the men though in those systems descent through the female part of the group is used to make a distinction vis-a-vis other groups.

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<sup>33</sup>The UNDP is considered to be the political party of the Islamic population (van Santen 1996).

*Islamized Mafa women still claim to be ethnically Mafa, but religiously, they identify with the Muslim community. They have a 'multiple identity' and have individually changed the content of 'gender relations'. However, this individual choice has consequences for gender relations on a structural level, -8S the clan they belong to (that has such an important role in Mafa society) loses its importance. As my research showed, the children of Islamized Mafa will have forgotten the clan's name. I could give many more details to prove the importance of women for Mafa (clan) group cohesion.*

*For Mafa men, there are many reasons to object to a daughter's or grand-daughter's change of religion: A grandfather gets the bride wealth of a man's first daughter. If she prefers to change husband after a while, this bride wealth need not to be returned by the father. After Islamization the bride wealth system changes. In the Islamic community a large part of the bride wealth is for the girl herself (sadaki), conform Islamic ideology. This implies that after Islamization a grand-father never knows what to expect from his future Islamic grand-son-in-law. They may decide to give him a symbolic gift to keep him quiet. But he may also end up with empty hands.*

Part of Mafa bride wealth is the labour of a son-in-law a father is entitled too. An Islamic man will never work with his own hands on the field of an "infidel heathen", even if the latter is his father-in-law. As one man expressed:

*"If we have a daughter who marries a Fulbe (he means: so who Islamizes), we just do not mention it. We pretend she is not getting married, we pretend as if she does not exist anymore. We can curse them and say they will never set foot in the house anymore. But then perhaps she may come secretly and curse her father, and then we (he means fathers) might die. So finally I will come to visit, but only after I have calmed down my anger. But will an Islamic son-in-law come to help me on my fields, or with other things? ... He is a good-for-nothing ..."*

As I mentioned before, fathers also need their daughters for their ritual functions on several occasions. During the bull feast, celebrated in the interest of the continuity of the clan, a daughter's presence is essential. The same goes for the funeral rites of men.

In patriarchal and patrilineal Mafa society, women often Islamized independently of their men as the example of Maama Laila in our introductory story showed us abandoning Mafa religious belief and cultural elements. This reality of the sudden abundance of elements that are part of an ethnic inheritance can only be understood if we consider the gender differences in this society. Mafa women could leave their ethnic group because as I have argued elsewhere the sexual division of labour (what we called gender structure) in religion gave them no responsibilities for the production of

‘neighbourhoods’ (Appadurai 1996: 180), or the continuity of the clan. The main responsibilities in Mafa religion had to be performed by Mafa men. Mafa women were supposed to be literally mutely present on these occasions. Their role facilitates an easy departure from local surroundings.

### **Ethnicity, historical identity and gender**

Another criterion to explain ethnic construction in the African context as well as elsewhere in the world, is historical identity. Most ethnic groups refer to the past to fulfil a need for continuity. A common ancestor may be projected upon the backdrop of a mythical past to symbolize and justify the idea of unity. In the founding histories of different Mafa groups, the Gudur massif, the source of the river Tsanaga, is the epicentre that is considered sacred. This may create a perspective of an unchangeable and timeless culture among the members of a specific ethnic group. The idea that ethnicity is not shaped by ‘objective’ cultural elements but by ‘ideas about cultural elements’ (see Eriksen 1993), implies that ethnic identity can be maintained in times of drastic cultural change. It may also mean that members of a group can identify with existing traditions without having to live accordingly.

In Fulbe and Mafa communal history, as in the case of many other groups in North Cameroon, the past has been defined in terms of descent and origin. By ascription to patrilineal descent groups, members are inducted into the collective history of patrilineal descent with clearly defined rules. It should be kept in mind that people’s conception of the past is based not only on historical facts. The past includes history as perceived by the members of the group. But there are limits to the manipulation of the past; otherwise, the past would lose its effectiveness (Peel: 1989: p. 200).

When the past is reviewed, there is a strong accent on patriarchal relations. Women are depicted as passive subjects on men’s stage, on which the actors make political alliances with other groups by marrying out ‘their’ women.

Within most ethnic groups in North Cameroon, women’s position does not benefit from reference to that common history. Therefore, they will probably choose another version. It should also be kept in mind that this vision of group history is an idealized view. In no way does it agree with reality as the example of Mafa society shows us. Mafa women readily leave their husband’s clan to marry into another clan or to Islamize. In the event of Islamization, the breach is thorough. Not only does she leave the area as the process of Islamization is concomitant with that of urbanization, but she also

abandons the rituals, the religious duties and the marriage system and prestations<sup>34</sup>.

In a world that offers alternative life styles, there are many ways for women to escape a patriarchal construction of ethnic identity, as the case of the Mafa demonstrates (van Santen 1993 a & b; 1996 b; 1998 a, b; forthcoming).

### **Security that local communities or neighbourhoods offer and gender**

In the region under consideration, kinship relations form the basis of many ethnic groups. Ethnicity has become significant in a complex kinship network. The common idea, as still expressed by Horowitz (1985) was that individuals may find security in that network, and that it structures daily activities. This implies that ethnic groups, localities or neighbourhoods are often perceived as large harmonious families. If so, we are ignoring the mutual contradictions which may exist between women and men on the level of 'gender symbolism' and 'gender structure', between women on the level of 'gender structure', and on the level of the 'individual gender', that is the differences within each woman.

In Mafa society, a newly wedded wife has a different status from that of her mother-in-law, even though this society is unknown within extended family structure. A woman without children has a different status from that of then women who already gave birth. A woman without sons will end up at old age with no position at all, if she is lucky. If she is unlucky, the surrounding community may accuse her of being amide, that a soul-eater, a potential threat for every member of society. This proves that feelings of security in Mafa society will be different for all these women. In the case of accusation of witchcraft security is totally absent.

The male perspective that is, a perspective that takes the interests of the male population as a point of departure - in Africanist ethnicity studies, makes an appeal to 'natural' arguments concerning descent to legitimize the differences within the own group and between the own group and 'other' groups.

As stated above, social cohesion in Mafa and Fulbe society is mostly structured by patrilineal descent. Children belong to the clan (Mafa: gwali; Fulfulde: asngol) of the father. Marriages between members of different ethnic groups are rare in non-Islamic Mafa environments. As the following example

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<sup>34</sup>In the Muslim community women's attitude is not very much different. Islamized women leave just as easily and few Fulbe women in North Cameroon remain with one husband for a lifetime.

shows, men may forbid women to leave the ethnic group, while the woman in this case had nothing to gain by a feeling of ethnic affiliation.

Mary was 15 years old and got pregnant. Though the Mafa have no preoccupation with virginity before marriage, a daughter should not be pregnant while still living under the roof of her father or the man who brought her up. Thereupon, Mary was sent away from the house of her paternal uncle, with whom she had lived since her father had died. She came to live with an old lady who lived on her own (her only son had migrated). The two of them sort of managed, though they lived in very poor conditions. One day a boy, attending the 'Lycee' in Mokolo but originally from the South of Cameroon (a total "stranger") came and claimed he was the father of the child. I was rather glad and exclaimed that all would be settled, as they could marry and get over and done with her difficult situation now. Then the whole circle of Mafa people around me started to utter in disgust that such was impossible, could never be the case, because, as they said "who is going to give away his daughter to a total stranger?" I spoke to her uncle later on and he said the same, so she remained with the old lady and the child by herself, and two years later gave birth to another child, from another 'stranger'. At the time the girl was too young to decide to go her own way against an eventual wish of her surroundings.

Contrary to Mafa society, in Fulbe and Islamic environments, mixed marriages are very common. In non-Fulbe Islamic society, being a Muslim becomes the most important identity. In both societies children belong to the father's patrilineal descent group.

The saddest aspect of Mary's case was, in the eyes of Mafa community, not the poor condition in which she had to bring up her children, but the fact that her children had no patrilineal clan, which made them sort of non-existent.

In a similar example of an Islamized Mafa woman who got a child from a total "stranger", the child was part of the Muslim community, which is a meaningful identity.

In the course of my research, I found out that Mafa women without sons often Islamised at a later age, as did Maama Laila. They deliberately never indicated this fact. Maama Laila said that she decided to Islamize due to the different appeals the men first husband, second husband, father, brother around her made. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the Muslim community offers her and women in similar situations some security, based on Islamic ideology that "traditional" Mafa society could not offer to them.

In general, the security a group may offer will be totally different for women and men. Conditions that provide a man's security may imply terror and violence for a woman. This divergence of interests may be even wider in

the event of migration to distant areas (see van Santen: 1998a; forthcoming). As Appadurai stated:

Women in particular bear the brunt of this sort of friction, for they become pawns in the heritage politics of the household and are often subject to the abuse and violence of men who are themselves torn about the relation between heritage and opportunity in shifting spatial and political formations (Appadurai 1996: 45).

It may also be the other way around. In a strong patriarchal society as that of the Mafa, the male spouse continuously fears he might be bewitched by his wife or one of his in-laws, an act that will lead to his death. As an old lady puts it:

*“The kuyuk of one’s father (so the paternal clan of the mother of a father) and one’s own kuyuk (the clan of one’s mother) ... well you always need to be aware of them and fear them. If you do not fear them enough, they are going to curse you, or they curse the whole gwali (father’s clan), because of your disrespect. It may be just a small thing. For example if you do not understand a thing, they only say ‘nei..’ and you are already cursed. Very simple ‘hai’ ... and you may lose your senses for the rest of your life. And if they have already cursed you, the only thing they can do is go to the diviner and ask him what to do. He will mostly tell you to go and make an offering at the place of the kuyuk under concern.”*

The strong position of the clan of one’s mother is due to the importance of the female category on a symbolic level - what we called before ‘gender symbolism’. On the other hand, Mafa society is patrilocal. This implies that the wife comes to live with a hostile clan and will be considered as a potential enemy. Thus, wives will probably develop different feelings about group cohesion than Mafa husbands, who always remain part of the descent group they were born to. The Fulbe marriage system favours cross-cousin marriages, which means that women ideally come to live in groups they are related to. However, Fulbe society has incorporated many female members of other ethnic groups, who need to find their way in a totally ‘alien’ society. My research indicated that women who want to Islamize in most cases come to live with Islamized relatives in town, to thereafter find their own way in the Islamic community. When an Islamized Mafa woman marries an Islamic Fulbe man her children will be ‘ethnic’ Fulbe and her ‘biological reproductive forces’ are lost for the Mafa community.

## Reproduction of ethnic identity and Gender

Reproduction is a central theme when gender is studied in relation to ethnicity.

Different types of reproduction may be distinguished (Edholm et al. 1977): Biological reproduction (biological procreation of group members); reproduction of the labour force; and social reproduction (reproduction of social and cultural relations).

Concerning social reproduction, it is important to take into account the fact that women and men may take a different perspective on the ethnic identity of their particular group. The images men and women have of biological and social reproduction need to be taken into account, when studying changing worldviews and their consequences on ethnic boundaries and group cohesion.

A conscious' and outspoken reason for Maama Laila in our introductory story to leave her group was the different appeals the men around her made. However, she was one among many women without sons who Islamized at an elderly age. The relation between mothers and sons is just as important as the relation between fathers and daughters. In Mafa society elderly women come to live with their youngest sons. Women without sons end up living alone. So we may say that the continued absence of biological offspring made Maama Laila, as many other childless women or women without sons, leave her ethnic group and Change identity.

In patrilineal groups, the boundaries of social cohesion within the groups and social differences between the group and the 'other' are often constructed via women. How women as acting subjects respond to male-constructed boundaries and whether they identify themselves with the same forms of social cohesion or have created their own boundaries, are topics that in general still need much investigation. Maama Laila's decision to leave the group, is a good example of a woman who in her specific ethnic context acts as a self-regulating agent whose own interests prevail above group interests.

Because of the group cohesion in patrilineal systems, direct biological reproduction is very important. From a male point of view, the crucial issues are with whom may women marry? Whose children do they bear? Whose offspring may they give birth to? As a consequence of biological reproductive capacities and their role in social reproduction, women are quite often ambivalent creatures in the perspective of men. On the one hand, they are physically and symbolically appreciated as procreators. An example OT 'symbolic gender' in Mafa society:



On a symbolic level, Mafa women are responsible for the harvest, the time, the seasonal change, etc. As we mentioned before, the female category is associated with right, with evenness, with life and with the primordial past. 'The number two', 'even', 'doubleness' lies at the source of 'being' and are key symbols in Mafa society. 'Uneven' is associated with male and the (patriarchal) organisation of 'here and now' society. Even and uneven need to be in balance. The female category always needs to be taken into account.

On the other hand women are often distrusted and therefore excluded from certain male activities, as shown in this example in which Mafa society solves the contradiction between the 'symbolic gender' and the 'structural gender':

*Women are excluded from the sacrifice on the mountain on behalf of the clan in Mafa society. If women would enter this exclusively male environment, she would lose her reproductive capacities and become sterile. However, because there needs to be a balance between male and female principles, she is symbolically represented by a male person. For this sacrifice, **three** male persons are present and **one** male person representing the female person, which makes **four** (that is: **three**, male principle and one (male principle) makes **four**, (female principle).*

Women may also be controlled because men fear their non-conformism towards patriarchal institutions of marriage, parenthood and inheritance and the values and norms that go with these institutions. The fact that women are absolutely necessary for reproduction and thus for the continuity of the group adds to the tension between the genders. Biological reproduction is also related to the reproduction of labour.

For the Mafa, this is visible in the pattern of marriage exchange. By marriage, the patrician' of the girl is connected with the patrician of her (future) husband, though a married woman herself will always remain part of the clan of her own father. Every household individually produces food crops, but during the harvest rituals, men of different households gather in the household of the daughter of one of them to drink the beer she has prepared. With this ritual drinking, the relation between the clan of the father and his daughter is emphasized. Through this custom, economic production, biological reproduction and the reproduction of labour are interconnected, because the father of the bride can always count on the labour input of his daughter's husband. By means of the bride price, a son-in-law gives part of his labour and his property to the father of his bride. In return, he obtains rights to the children she hopefully will give birth to in the future. When daughters decide to Islamize and thereafter marry men of other ethnic groups, this

connection between the different types of reproduction and production is broken. So it is in the interest of the fathers that daughters to marry within their own ethnic group.

### **Endogamy, 'ethnic identity and gender in North Cameroon**

The Mafa have a caste society, are ethnically endogamous, caste endogamous and clan exogamous. People from clans of a blacksmith caste and people from clans of the non-blacksmith caste do not marry each other. People are not allowed to marry within the clan of the father, or the clan of the mother up till three generations. Non-Islamic people do not often marry people from other ethnic groups as the case of Mary has shown us.

This has obvious consequences for the various levels of reproduction I distinguished. Founded on unilinearity exogamic clan groups come into being, that need clear marriage rules, in order to keep reproductive capacities of their own women, again looked at from a male point of view as much as possible within the group. In a patriarchal society, these rules are most probably in the interest of maintaining this patriarchy. But as we know from the case of the Mafa women, women in general never completely submit themselves. After Islamization, Mafa women become ethnically exogamous and ensuingly marry Islamic men of other ethnic groups.

An important part of ideology concerning ethnic endogamy are the stereotypes that are used to distinguish the 'own' women and men compared to women and men of other groups. We already mentioned the view Mafa people have and maintain vis-a-vis Kapsiki men. Ethnic differences are marked by referring to the way in which men of other groups treat their women or the women their men or the relations between the genders in general. So gender is not only used as a symbol of 'objective' cultural differences between ethnic groups, but it also ventilates biases and mythical views that strengthen these differences.

With the Mafa, ethnic endogamy does apply to women as well as men, but in Fulbe society endogamy only holds for men. The Fulbe in North Cameroon still consider other ethnic groups to be inferior (infidels *haabe*), as expounded by Islamic ideology. Furthermore, the Fulbe feel that to 'civilize' is synonymous with to 'Islamize'. Notwithstanding these attitudes adoption of non-Fulbe children was never a problem nor was concubinage or marriage between Fulbe men and women of other groups. In former days, they also married their female slaves, whose children thereafter had the same rights as other children from the patrilineage. Social reproduction among the Fulbe took place by incorporation of non-male members of other ethnic groups.

With reference to Islam, the group considered marriage between Fulbe women and non-Fulbe men to be out of the question. This 'openness' to non-Fulbe women and children can be understood as a collective strategy. It has allowed the politically dominant Fulbe to overcome the obstacle of being a numerical minority in the North Cameroonian context. Women are not just passive objects in such a 'strategy'. They use it to strengthen or improve their own position (see also v.d. Berg 1996).

### **Language, socialization and gender**

In North Cameroon, the borders of ethnic regions are also marked by the different languages spoken by members of the various groups. Depending on the ethnic group under consideration, differences may emerge between women and men. In Fulbe society, women use a different language than men. In fact the genders are not even supposed to openly communicate with each other in public. This implies that two women of different ethnic groups sometimes communicate more easily with each other than a woman and a man from the same ethnic group. Non-Islamic autochthonous men are not even considered a threat to the sexual integrity of Fulbe women. Whereas women cannot speak in public with their own men, they can laugh and joke with men from 'inferior' ethnic groups, as the latter are not considered to be 'sexually' plausible marriage partners. Due to the recent waves of Islamism, this may Change. In the cases given, inter-ethnic contact is based on unilateral ethnic endogamy.

Appadurai emphasized that the trans-generational stability of knowledge was presupposed in most theories of enculturation (or of socialization). He assumes that marriages become the meeting points of historical patterns of socialization and new ideas of proper behaviour. However, before even considering Changes in 'habitus' we need to be aware that many traditions are gender-bound. Customs that are part of the process of socialization, and which contribute to the development of ethnic consciousness from early childhood onwards, are quite different for women and men in most societies. Various institutions on which group cohesion is predicated may have different meanings for women and men. Patrilineal and matrilineal kinship systems are not the only institutions to be considered. Patterns of settlement or inheritance may also put a slant on the way ethnic consciousness is constructed. Maama Laila considered the Fulbe inheritance system, which entitles women to inherit property, one of the advantages of Islamization. She formulated it as follows:

*“Me, Oaada Reinout (mother of Reinout, my son), I like to trade to find some money. I will buy my own piece of land [Mafa women traditionally do not own land] and I will build my own house there. And then I also like to have a person beside me with whom I can talk [So to have a husband is always nice, she means]. And if one day I will no longer be alive, my daughter, the mother of Laila, can take it together with my trade, and then if one day she no longer gets along with her husband, she can live in that house ...”*

## **Crumbling Fulbe hegemony and new ethnic consciousness**

In Mafa society, a transnational change took place as Islamization coincided with colonization, urbanization and ‘civilization’. Due to the fact that Islam in these areas is very much a town religion, until recently many local rural surroundings in the mountainous area remained relatively unaffected by Islamic values. However, due to overpopulation, many inhabitants needed to make a living elsewhere. These migrants were mainly male (women tend to stay behind). Not only were they confronted with a rapidly changing world, but they also brought elements of this world back home (van Santen: 1998a; Schaafsma and Zuiderwijk: 1997; Schaafsma: 1998; van Santen and Schaafsma: forthcoming). Thus the outside world, and all the influences that pervade it, not only find their ways to the once inaccessible rocky slopes that characterize the Mafa habitat, but also strengthen their feelings of ethnic identity.

So, nowadays, two streams of non-local influences more or less compete with each other: One is the transnational influence of Islam, which predominated until recently. The other is the more Western-oriented flow of ideas that non-Islamic migrants bring when they come back from the cities.

Since my initial fieldwork in the area (1986-1988), the political context has altered; the dominant position of the Fulbe is crumbling. Mokolo, the town once founded by the Fulbe people, until recently had a mainly Islamic character though non-Muslim quarters existed. Now Mokolo has become an urban centre for Mafa people<sup>35</sup>. The migrants in particular have developed an ethnic consciousness. During my stay in Mokolo town in 1992, 1995 and 1998, I found to my great surprise that Mafa had replaced Fulfulde as the lingua franca, even in the market place. This new ethnic consciousness is also evident in other areas in North Cameroon (see Schilder 1994 and v.d.Berg 1996). It may reflect differences in formal education. The South still considers the North ‘back warded’ compared to the rest of Cameroon in the area of education, as strangely enough Islamic education never counted in the

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<sup>35</sup>The Mafa clans never lived in centralized villages, but in settlements scattered throughout the mountains.

statistics - and for a long time the Fulbe were mainly interested in religious education. Non-Islamic groups started to attend secular schools much sooner than the Islamic population. For example, the percentage of Mafa who finished secondary school seems to be higher than the percentage for the Fulbe. The new self-awareness of non-Islamic ethnic groups also comes up in political events<sup>36</sup> (van Santen and Schilder 1994; van Santen 1996a; van Santen 1998: a,b van Santen: forthcoming). However, new developments change the scene. The process of Islamism may lead to a situation whereby ethnic boundaries countess (which may be an advantage in a world where ethnic clashes become ever more violent), but Islamic ideology becomes more prominent. Not surprisingly in this ideology rules concerning proper behaviour and conduct of women and men are prominent. If we continue to exclude gender relations from our analyses, we will lose track of society's reality.

## Summary and Conclusions

I have argued that in Africa, contrary to the European situation, ethnic groups do not apply to a notion of consanguinity to define their own ethnic group. The case of the Mafa, an ethnic group in North Cameroon, shows that neither 'cultural explanations' nor 'political explanations' as used in the ethnicity debate, could elucidate what exactly defines the boundaries of ethnic identity. For the Mafa, ethnic 'Mafa' identity is only a phenomenon of importance since Islamization and migration on a large scale started to occur. Until recently clan-descendancy was more important.

Studies on ethnicity have hardly included gender relations within different ethnic groups. If in the future they will finally regard gender relations, these should not just be taken for granted as meaning the relations between women and men without any analytical implications, but for the sake of analyses, should be divided. I acknowledged a symbolic structure, by which I meant the difference between female and male identities which are constituted in the process of cultural reproduction and 'ideas' about how women and men ought to behave. Further, a structural gender level, that is the way rights and duties within a society are divided between women and men. Finally, an individual gender level that is concerned with the ideas women and men in specific cultural or local (ethnic) contexts have about the gender roles they ought to fulfil and the way they should actually fulfil them. In addition, gender does not just stand for the relation between women and men as spouses, but relations

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<sup>36</sup>Whereas the local Mafa lamido (chief) in town used to be a Muslim in the 1991 elections also non-Muslim Mafa men were candidates for this position (van Santen 1996a).

between mothers and sons, fathers and daughters, brothers and sisters, uncles and nieces etc. ought to be included also.

In this paper, I looked at the way ethnic identity is constructed in patrilineal and virilocal societies like those of the Mafa and Fulbe, and I showed that in an ethnic endogamic and clan exogamic society like that of the Mafa, differences between one ethnic group and the 'other' are constructed through the women. In Fulbe society, ethnic endogamy only holds for men, and marriage with women from other ethnic groups was in the past a collective strategy that allowed the Fulbe who were politically but not numerically dominant, to overcome the obstacle of being a numerical minority in the North Cameroonian context.

Ethnic differences are also marked by referring to the way in which men of other groups treat their women or the women their men or the relations between the genders in general. So gender ventilates biases and mythical views that strengthen ethnic differences.

Gender relations are often essential to understand how 'ethnicity' is constructed and maintained. Though in Mafa society relations between father-daughter, mother -son, brothers and sisters are more important, men - like elsewhere need to have a sexual relation with women in order to physically reproduce their society, their ethnic group. They not only need 'their' women for biological reproduction, but also for the social reproduction and the reproduction of labour force. However, women are no passive agents in these 'needs of men'. The examples of Mafa society have shown that women have all sort of strategies to play their role in the construction of ethnic groups and boundaries. In Mafa society a common strategy was to Islamize and marry Islamic men from other ethnic groups. Taking into consideration the 'structural' gender relations in Mafa society, it is easy to see that Mafa women do not have an active role within religious activities and this facilitates an easy departure and change of religious identity.

Another criterion that shapes ethnic identity is historical identity. In the case of the Mafa and the Fulbe, the past is defined in terms of patrilineal descent and origin. However, the past also includes history as perceived by the members of the group. When the past is reviewed with a strong accent on patriarchal relations, this mostly does not benefit women's position, so they will probably choose another version. I argued that in a world that offers alternative lifestyles - in the case of the Mafa, changing religious identity means a change of identity altogether - there are many ways for women to escape a patriarchal construction of ethnic identity.

It is also argued that membership of an ethnic community offers its members security. This may differ for women and men. Mafa men do not like



to see 'their' women marry men from other groups, and this attitude may have serious repercussions (sometimes violent) on women. An important gender relation within their society is those between mothers and especially her youngest son, with whom she will live at old age. If she does not have sons, Mafa society offers little security at old age. Many elderly Mafa women who Islamized did so, because in those cases the Islamic community offers them a security, based on Islamic ideology. Also the virilocal settlement pattern and clan exogamic marriage pattern means that a Mafa woman may marry into a rather hostile clan and for her security, she depends on her own clan via her father and or brothers. This lack of security in daily life may be at the base of a woman's decision to leave the group, so to have her own interest prevail above group interests. With my contribution I wanted to indicate the necessity to include gender as an analytical concept in the study of ethnicity. Gender is not just about 'adding women'. Gender relations are not just 'men's' private affairs. Gender as an analytical scientific concept is essential to understand ethnic processes of inclusion and exclusion all over the world, also in Africa. Hopefully it will be included in- the new millennium.

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## **Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts in Africa: Ghana's Example**

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### **Abstract**

People are organized in their traditional milieu by their ethnicity. Thus, in Africa and indeed, in other parts of the world, ethnic groupings give identity to people within the context of nationalism. Factors that have influenced ethnic behaviours have been: pride, superiority and inferiority complexes, hatred emanating from success of the other ethnic group, discrimination against the minorities and the question of land ownership.

The Konkomba/Nanumba/Oagomba/Gonja ethnic conflicts of 1917, 1940 and 1996 confirmed some of the factors enumerated above. The immediate causes of the conflicts were ownership of land and complex arising from ethnic superiority on the side of the Konkomba's opponents.

The wild Konkomba who lived in vii/ages were supposed to pay allegiance to the YaNa and the Oagomba sub-chiefs who were the original owners of the land. Though the Konkomba have lived among the Oagomba for a long time, the latter had never regarded them as owners of the land (Figs. 1 & 2). The strangers, that is, the Konkomba are not centrally organized; therefore talking to them has always been a problem. When they take up arms, it becomes difficult to stop them because it is not easy to talk to a group of people who are organizationally disjointed.

The Konkomba are now being empowered to develop chiefship. This idea is being spearheaded by the Konkomba Youth Association KOYA, while the question of land ownership is being addressed.

### **Introduction**

The term ethnicity refers to a group of people with a common socio/cultural identity such as: language, common worldview, religion and common cultural traits. It is used interchangeably with the term Tribe. Unfortunately, the early European writers used the term "tribe" to refer to a group of uncivilized people, as if it had a different meaning from the term

“ethnic group”. A European writer will refer to ethnic Albanians (because they are Europeans and refer to the Nanumba tribe ).<sup>1</sup>

It must, however, be stated that the main tenets associated with an ethnic group are the same as a tribe.

In Ghana, like most parts of Africa, the colonialists encouraged factionalism and used it to rule the people through their tribal chiefs.<sup>2</sup> Due to the fact that tribalism is so rooted in Africa, it has been postulated that it is important that ethnicity in Africa should be considered and analysed in the context of contemporary economical and socio-political changes.’ This is because it plays such a significant role in both local and national polity.

Certainly, the so-called Northern Conflict like other conflicts in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Liberia, Nigeria and several African countries have ethnic dimensions.” In the case of Northern Ghana (see Map 1) a small area, as the map depicts, contains about seven ethnic groups each with its district cultural traits and allegiance to its central polity. The administrative districts created by the Central Administration of Ghana just dumped these groups together without any ethnic group consideration or aspirations. This manner of grouping alone was bound to generate conflicts.”

## **Causes of Ethnic Conflict in the North**

The geographic distribution of the Konkomba ethnic groups (Fig. 2) shows a widespread distribution of the group among the other ethnic groups. Unfortunately, the land tenure systems among the ethnic groups regard the Konkomba groups as landless. The truth of the matter was that the Konkomba who lived in the Togo (French) territory made a safe haven of the Gold Coast, whenever they committed an offence in Togo. Therefore the Konkomba of Ghana and their compatriots from Togo who were regarded as criminals and landless had lived in Ghana unhindered.

The second problem is the fact that they are a minority group among the well-established ethnic groups such as the Dagomba, the Nanumba and the Gonja. The number of Konkomba bandits from Togo kept swelling up while the British Colonial Administration of the Gold Coast refused to extradite or repatriate them. These landless and lawless people without a traditional central authority appeared uncontrollable.

The Konkomba of Ghana has no central political authority. They are a people who only have the clan heads as their leaders. Martinson (1995) observed:

“It is important to note that, according to Konkomba political theory and practice, in any clan emergency, the clan head sends out messengers to



summon members of the clan who have broken away from the parent village. The summons is one which may not be denied. The usual summons even today, regrettably enough, is the call to arms” (p.49)

I think this political philosophy of the Konkomba was expedient for their survival among people who regarded them as not only hostile but aliens.

They also have the Tindana, the Priest of the land/earth, who handles their spiritual affairs. The religiosity of these people is so strong that the Tindana holds such a tremendous sway on them.

Unfortunately the Konkomba of Ghana do not consider themselves as aliens. History among the Konkomba has it that they were the first to occupy the heartland of Dagbon that is the Vendi area. This claim is vehemently rejected by the account of Mr. Geofferey Parker, Acting District Commissioner, Vendi in 1924.

The point is that even if they lived in the Dagbon heartland as people of the soil, they were easily defeated by the centrally and militarily organized invaders. And because they could not build permanent settlements, but rather lived on shifting cultivation basis, nobody gave them the chance as the original owners of the land. The Konkomba never had a lasting influence on the socio-political landscape.

One major weakness among the Konkomba is their socio-political system. Since they do not have a centralized or focal point of mobilization for peaceful purposes, therefore it becomes difficult to talk to them. They only seem to come together when they see themselves threatened.

## **The Diasporan Konkomba**

Martinson (1995) opined that “the most dangerous and destabilizing groups of the Konkombas are those who have never had the opportunity of staying in Dagbon or Nanuung to test the conscience of the people and their hospitality.” (p.65).

The last but crucial problem has been the ownership of the territory now called Dagbon, Gonja and Nanuum. The ethnic Konkomba think that they were the original settlers in those areas and must be accorded such a status. On Gonja land, C.A. Wallace, the Ag. District Commissioner in a letter dated 19th December, 1925 at p.5 noted: “The land belongs to Kombi Stool and it is not permitted to alienate any portion of it without the Stool holder being consulted”. (p.85)

In the case of Western Dagomba, distinction is made between the Tindana, the Earth priest, and a Chief. The earth priest did not own the land; he only propitiated the spirits of the earth/land. While the Chief was the

owner of the land in Trust for his subjects. A. J. Cutfield, the District Commissioner on 14th February, 1927 wrote: "For all land in Dagbon, the People, the Community, the Stool, the Chief on behalf of the people for the period of his occupation as representing them, is termed the owner." p.87

Martinson, quoting the Ag. District Commissioner of Vendi mentioned the conquest of Vendi land as a thing of the past. He wrote: As far as can be gathered from Linguists, and Troubadours attached to Na of Vendi's court, the conquest of what we now call Dagbon took place during the First twenty years of the fifteenth century. That is in 1420 AD." p.88

If these are the territories the Konkomba are claiming today as theirs then it cannot be supported by any historical fact.

These problems are the result of wars which the Konkomba have been waging with the other ethnic groups among whom they live.

There had been several conflicts/wars between the Konkomba and other ethnic groups such as the Dagomba and the Nanumba, for example in 1940. That was the Zegbeli War: Konkomba vrs. Dagomba. The Konkomba were found guilty as the aggressors. Martinson.

The 1940 conflict was not the first encounter between the Konkomba and the Dagomba.

Between 1914 and 1917, a period which coincided with the First World War, the Konkomba were said to be "hysterically busy cleansing the Dagomba in Northern Ghana." (p.54) Also between 1940 and 1943, the Konkomba unilaterally declared war against the Dagomba. This incidentally was during the peak of World War II.

The Second Konkomba/Dagomba War was baptised the Cow War. Martinson clearly explains the cause of the Konkomba attack: "... That the Chief of Zegbeli (a Dagomba) had secretly come to an agreement with the British Veterinary Officer to kill their cows by administering a rinderpest dose, which to them (the Konkombas) was not proper. Hence since it was a Dagomba Chief who led the Veterinary Officers to their Kraals, all the Dagomba, including their Chiefs, should die as a result of the loss of Konkomba cattle." (p.56)

Indeed, the Konkomba complied when the Chief of Zegbeli was killed before the police arrived. Hence, this War was baptized the Cow War.

The third recorded Konkomba/Dagomba war lasted from 19th to 21st May, 1946. The war started when a Dagomba man was found fishing in a pond the Konkomba claimed belonged to them. Hence the Fish War.

## The Peculiarity of the Northern Conflict

In most ethnic conflicts, while the majority uses their sheer numbers to traumatize the minority, here, it is rather the minority who employed their aggressive attitude to start the conflict. Through their distribution, they are scattered among the other ethnic groups, but live their isolated lives. With the support of their kinsmen across the Ghana/Togo international border, they were able to cause mayhem on the people amongst whom they live. The Konkomba are feared not only as archers but also as good marksmen when they hold the gun.

In the last conflict, in 1995, people wondered how they came by the sophisticated AK47 assault guns and communication equipment.

## Conclusion

With the scenario painted about the Konkomba, any time they get any flimsy excuse they may take up arms again. In view of this, the government has set up a permanent Review Committee as well as Police Peace Keeping Service in the affected areas in the Northern Region, just to contain the Konkomba.

In addition to the above arrangement, consideration may be given to a Ten point Peace Plan put forth by Prof. Martinson.<sup>15</sup>

1. A total ban of firearms (including bows and arrows) in the Northern Region of Ghana for an unspecified time.

Note: The people of the North use bows and arrows for hunting purposes.

2. A non-aggression pact to be signed by the warring factions and witnessed by the UN.

Note: The Konkomba genocide, unlike the other ethnic conflicts, had not attracted the attention of United Nations or the International Community.

3. All those found liable for the genocide in the North (burning down of houses, villages, killing of children, women and old men) should be tried by special tribunals.

4. Compensation for life and property lost in this 'Konkomba War' should either be paid by the aggressors or from the donations by foreign donors.

Note: I do not see how foreign donors should come in. Since the Konkomba have taken to arms with very flimsy excuses they should be made to pay for the damages they cause on otherwise peaceful ethnic groups.

5. Regional Assemblies should be created in all the 10 Regional Capitals, starting from the Northern and Volta Regions, because of the current conflicts.

Note: This will mean an amendment in the country's Constitution. Our Constitution has persistently stood against regionalism which eventually leads into Federalism. Ghana voted against this system of governance, as far back as 1954 and 1956.

6. Creation of Regional Vigilantes, as well as District and local Vigilantes to be “watchdogs” of National Security to be supervised by traditional security agencies.

7. Identification and registration of the Diasporan Konkomba that is the Togo Konkomba from the indigenous Konkomba from Ghana (Nafeba, Gbimba and Chamba).

8. Ghanaians should be told through a Gazette the true owners of the lands on which lived the Dagbon, the Nanuum and the Gonja. This may discourage future incursions of aggressors into lands of peaceful a people.

9. The presence of military (bases) in Vendi, Bimbilla, Salaga and Kpandai. A permanent Air Force base at Chereponi or Karaga and Airborne at Saboba Geostrategically, this is very commendable, since around this area, we can oversee what Togo is doing.

10. A proper appraisal of military accoutrements: especially the AK47s. Who supplied the warring factions with this type of weapon, since this is the bona fide property of the Armed Forces?

Lastly, we must emphasize the peculiarity of the Northern conflict. It rather emanates from the fierce ethnic Konkomba who are in minority but who are materially rich because of their hard work, mainly as yam farmers. The wealth they had amassed had given them a false sense of superiority over the other ethnic groups amongst whom they lived. For the establishment of peaceful coexistence they have been allowed to have a chief but the chief has to be enthroned by the Yana whose over lordship is now not in doubt. Now there is absolutely no cause for any Konkomba uprising in the Northern Region of Ghana. But news filtering through indicate that the Konkomba are still not happy with their status as aliens and landless, a status which is very difficult to obliterate so quickly.

## References and Notes

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8. Parker's letter dated 21 st August, 1924, quoted by Martinson, op.cit., pp.90-91.
9. Ibid.
10. Matinson quoting: Chief Commissioner's letter NO.CS310, Tamale NT, 17th September, 1940.
11. Ibid. p.87
12. Ibid. p.88
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15. Ibid.



## **Ethnic Tensions in the Bafut Kingdom of the Northwest of Cameroon**

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### **Introduction**

For more than a generation, the African continent has been in the news. There have been independence movements with wars of liberation, and emergence of new states. Then came the task of nation-building, which instead brought in military governments, civil autocracy, and civil wars in some states. The beginning of the decade of the 1990's brought some hope when the wind of democratic change started blowing across Africa from Eastern Europe. As optimism was kindled and glowed it was soon snuffed out by another frightening phenomenon, namely, the nightmare of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts. The results of this new nemesis of Africa has been so disturbing that people are wondering what the new millennium holds for a perennially troubled continent.

Like any other cultural trait, ethnicity is not new in Africa. It is the basis of life built on the family, since the African is very much attached to his family. It has therefore many positive aspects. But the negative aspects are also there and have exhibited themselves at different periods of African history. Some Africanists have blamed colonialism for exploiting these negative aspects. But the pre-colonial African state, homogeneous or heterogeneous in structure had its own problems of ethnicity and conflicts. That is what this paper sets out to investigate. Taking one example of a heterogeneous polity, the Bafut Kingdom, of North West Cameroon, we will attempt to trace the origins of ethnicity and the factors that bred and are still breeding tension in that state.

### **Setting**

Bafut (Ala'Bufu) is situated about twenty kilometres northwest of Bamenda and covers an area of roughly three hundred and forty square kilometres. The population of 60,000 according to the 1987 census is settled in three main zones. At the centre are the people of Mumala'a (heart of the country) clustered around the Fon's Palace (Nto'o) who refer to themselves as



the real Bafut (Bufu). This name has been applied to the whole chiefdom. To the South is the ntare (ridge area) and to the North the Mbunti (lower) which descends abruptly to the Menchum River valley. The Bafut language is classed within the MbamNkam Section of the central branch of the Nigeria-Congo family along with other nearby languages such as Bali Nyonga, Bamum and Pinyin (Voorhoeve 1971: 112). Oral tradition traces dynastic origins to the Ndobbo or Tikari areas. Such dynastic origin claims are shared with groups such as Kom, Nso that may be distinguished by their centralized political institutions headed by seemingly powerful Fons. The Fons are assisted and their powers are checkmated by regulatory societies, the most powerful being the kwifo or ngumba.

By the time of the German annexation of the Cameroons in the late nineteenth century, Bafut had roughly assumed its present make-up. The German explorer, Dr. Eugen Zintgraff, visited Bafut in 1889 (Chilver 1966). German rule in the Cameroon was subsequently replaced by British and French rule during the First World War (1914-18). Bafut fell in the British sector and remained so till the end of colonial rule in Cameroon.

### **Indigenous Socio-Political Organization**

Bafut society is patrilineal in its kinship relations. It means that descent and succession could be claimed through the father. The marriage system is virilocal. The smallest unit of the kinship group is the nuclear family (njinda bottom of the house) which corresponds to the smallest territorial unit of the chiefdom, that is, the compound (ndugu). It may be monogamous or polygamous. The compound head can also be the head of an extended family (ngweenda). Next comes the lineage (acheu) consisting of a number of extended families, whose members claim descent from a common ancestor. Marriage between members is strictly forbidden. Succession in Bafut is not by primogeniture. With the exception of the first son, any other son was entitled to succeed. A father with many sons usually chose the favourite one and not necessarily the eldest.

The Bafut political system, which has been greatly tempered and modified by colonial intrusion centred on the Fon or mfor who was the fount of the political and religious life of the people (Ritzenthaler: 1962, Chilver and Kaberry: 1963, Aletum: 1974). The Fon had multifarious functions; he controlled external relations and he made laws. All justice was administered in his name; he was the final court of appeal and had power of life and death over his subjects. As chief priest, he offered sacrifices to his ancestors and interceded with them for the welfare of the people.

The Fon was assisted and advised by titled royals. The most prominent among them being the mamfor, the mother of the Fon, who was either his real mother or sister. In addition, there were two fraternal assistants called ndimfor (the elder brothers) and muma (younger brother). However, none of these royals served as regent in the case of the King's death or indisposition. The body which actually shared power with the Fon and deputized for him was the council of elders, kwifor. kwifor means holder or supporter of the Fan, but its role was far more pervasive; membership was restricted to commoners who had attained the rank of bukum (sing. nkum). The strength of kwifor lay in its role as a council of kingmakers and was thus a check on royal power.

In summary, the government of Bafut was a complex web of relations of kinship, loyalty and tribute which is centred on the palace, the ntoo bOfa. The palace was not only the residence of the Fon but also housed the all-pervading and powerful kwifor which works in close collaboration with him. Before colonial rule, the government was effective in maintaining law and order and enabling rulers and subjects to carry out their normal activities. The establishment of colonial rule had far-reaching effects on the system.

### **Ethnic Composition of Bafut**

Bafut is a heterogeneous kingdom. If we use Vansina's (1962) model in the classification of African kingdoms, Bafut would most probably fall into the third category, that is, an incorporative kingdom. The five types of kingdoms on Vansina's list are, (i) despotic kingdom (ii) royal kingdom, (iii) aristocratic kingdoms and (iv) federations. The characteristics of an incorporative kingdom are: firstly, that it has been enlarged by conquest; secondly, that the conquest started from a nucleus and thirdly, that the impetus to the conquest was given by an immigrant group.

Geographically, as we have seen above, Bafut is divided into three zones. This division also reflects the ethnic configuration. At the centre, clustered around the Fon's palace are the people of mumala. They are settled in the following, villages, Bujong which serves as the capital, Manji, Mbebali, Njinteh, Niko, Mankaah, Nchum and Njibujang. These villages are directly ruled by the Fon through an appointed head (tanukuru) who was usually a prince. Along with other elders (bukum), they constitute a governing council, butabunukuru. These were, the villages that figured in British administrative reports in 1934 (Hook, 1934). But since then, with increase in population, the number of such settlements directly ruled by the Fon has increased. The new settlements are: Nsem, Agyati, Ntabuwe. Other more distant ones are: Swei, Nforya and Akosia. The core settlers in these areas are mostly from mumala.

Next, we have the ntare (the ridge) zone, which is made up of semi-autonomous settlements, each with its own locally appointed chief also called atangchuo (planner of war). These villages include: Mambu, Bawum, Mbebili, Mankanikong, Mankwi and Banji. In terms of topography they are on highland. Other villages in this category, though not located in the same zone, are Bukari, Buwe and Akofunguba.

Lastly, there is the lower zone (mbuntl) located in the upper Menchum valley. This area is settled by non-Bafut-speaking peoples; that is, Beba-speaking who according to tradition, were brought under Bafut sway by conquest. These are: Mbekong, Bugiri, Obang, Otang, Aba, Buwi, Manta, Buno'o and Agah. These villages too have their chiefs. All these semi-autonomous villages were linked to the centre through gifts to the palace in the form of specialized products such as palm oil, raphia palm wine, fish or other products which the locality produced.

### **Ethnicity and Ethnic Tensions**

Literally, ethnicity originates from *ethnos* (Gr) meaning nation or people. Therefore denotatively, ethnicity and nationalism mean the same thing. But in the connotative sense, the two terms do not mean the same thing because of the different values attached to them. When the same phenomenon manifests itself in one part of the world, it is called nationalism, while in another part, especially in Africa, it is ethnicism. According to Nnoli (1980) ethnicity is a social phenomenon associated with interactions among members of different ethnic groups. Ethnic groups in themselves are social formations distinguished by the communal character of their boundaries. The relevant communal factor may be language, culture or both. In Africa, language has clearly been the crucial factor. Ethnic groups may not necessarily be homogeneous entities, linguistically or culturally. Minor linguistic and cultural differences often exist within the group, forming the basis for the delineation of sub-ethnic systems.

In Cameroon, there are ethnic groups that are homogeneous in character, where language and culture coincide. There are other groups such as the centralized monarchies in the West and Northwest plateau region, where there are various ethnic groups within one polity sometimes speaking one language but with different cultures. These centralized structures were accomplished in Nso, Bafut, Kom, Bali and Fontem, where migrant dynasties apparently superimposed themselves on the autochthonous peoples. These new rulers therefore became paramount chiefs (Chilver and Kaberry, 1963, Kaberry: 1959, 1963). Bafut is an example of such a heterogeneous kingdom which encompasses not only Bafut-speaking peoples but also non-Bafut-speakers.

## The Bafut Case

We will examine ethnicity in Bafut in the context of Hameso's (1997:9) definition. It is that ethnicity signifies perceptions of common origin, historical memories ties of people. It has its foundations in combined remembrances of past experiences and in common aspirations, values, norms and expectations. The different ethnic components of Bafut society have their own traditions of origin, migrations and settlement. Some definitely exhibit different cultural traits, even though they speak the same language, sometimes with slight variations. Traditions have attributed the status of autochthones to peoples like the Bukari, the Buwe and Mbebeli. These peoples claim that they have always been where they are.

On the other hand, the Bawum migration legend is clear, namely, that they moved from Ala'ante, near the present Bamenda station, because of an earthquake, first to Mbebeli and then to Bawum. Meanwhile, the peoples of Mambu and Mankanikong only arrived at the beginning of the nineteenth century into the Bamenda plateau. Both were of Widekum origin and claim to have come from the same area, Mberewi (Chilver and Kaberry, 1967:20).

The traditions of the peoples of central Bafut, Mumala'a are closely aligned with those of the ruling dynasty which claim a Tikari origin. The versions of these traditions seem to vary with time and circumstances. According to those recorded by British administrators in the 1920's (Hawkesworth, 1926) the Bafut peoples, along with Nso, Kom, Bum and others moved unto their present respective locations from the regions of Ndobo or Tikari situated in the Northwest of Fumban, in the present-day Western Province of Cameroon. The Bafut groups separated around the present day Ndop (Ngoketunjah). After a roundabout route through Wum, they eventually settled in their present site and then began to conquer and absorb the people around them, that is, those of the Widekum stock. It should be noted that at that time, the British viewed the whole Bamenda plateau to have been originally settled by the Widekum. These people who now inhabit present-day Momo, parts of Menchum and Mezam Divisions claim the Widekum area as their legendary place of origin. The colonial authorities were able to distinguish them from the Tikari because of their segmentary political structure as opposed to Tikari centralized system.

In Bafut today, court traditions attribute the founding of the Bafut dynasty to Anghanjo who left Ndop with his brother, Nkenjoh after the death of their father (Niba, 1981). While Nkenjoh founded the nearby chiefdom of Babanki, Aghanjo arrived in the village of Mbebeli and he was well received and hosted by the chief, Nibachi. After staying with him as guest for some time, it is said

that Aghanjo won over Nibachi's subjects to himself by generosity. When the council of elders grew tired of Nibachi's parsimony, they conspired with Aghanjo and urged him to depose their chief. The modality of deposition was that during a public ceremony, he would pass before the chief and step on his foot. That would be a sign of deposition. Aghanjo did so and Nibachi was unanimously declared by the elders as dethroned. He eventually committed suicide. Later on, one of Aghanjo's successors moved the palace from Mbebeli to the present site at Bujong in mumala'a. Since dynastic traditions do not always talk about the ordinary people, one is left to guess that Aghanjo came with followers, who eventually settled in mumala'a with his descendants. Autochthonous collaborators would have also been among these' followers. From their nucleus at Bujong, the population, eventually swelled by other immigrants, expanded to new settlements as Mbebali, Manji, Mankaha, Niko, Njinteh, Njibujang, and Nchum. These are villages today in Bafut, as we have seen above, that are directly ruled by the Fon.

Furthermore, from the Bujong nucleus, the descendants of Aghanjo and their followers engaged in wars of conquest. In this, they were favoured by circumstances. One of them was the incursion of the Bali Chamba into the Bamenda area at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Jeffreys, 1962, Chilver and Kaberry, 1970). The Chamba incursions affected the balance of power in the area. It brought them into conflict with the bigger kingdoms and sent the smaller kingdoms seeking refuge under the bigger ones. Bafut, after a clash with the Chamba, became a rallying point for refugees from the south and southwest from the Ngemba area (Tweed, 1926). Some of them eventually went back after the war but others such as Mambu and Mankanikong remained. These chiefdoms became tributaries of Bafut through voluntary submission.

Bafut also expanded northwards into the upper Menchum valley after' the Chamba incursion, around the middle of the nineteenth century. These raids must have been dictated by land hunger as well as the desire for tribute. Some of the peoples, such as the Otang, Buwi and Bugiri were subdued. Others such as the Mbekong, Manta and Butang had to voluntarily submit. The expansion of Bafut into the Menchum valley inevitably brought them into clash with its powerful neighbours, BebaBefang and Kom which were interested in the area. Thus, most of the Bafut wars in the nineteenth century were against the BebaBefang, but there was also a clash with Kom over the control of the tributary chiefdom of Mejang. However, the Bafut were forced to withdraw (Hawkesworth, 1926).

Another area which Bafut brought under its control was Banji (njimeya over the Mezam River) with its rich savannah farming and hunting grounds.

They subdued inhabitants and made them pay tribute. The inhabitants speak a Widekum dialect. Bafut people also began to settle there.

On the eve of German annexation of Cameroon in the late nineteenth century, Bafut had assumed its present boundaries and makeup, as a heterogeneous kingdom. It was a conquest state.

As a heterogeneous kingdom, the ethnic lines have been shifting. The degree of integration of the various peoples has varied. "Like any other social phenomenon" as Nnoli (1980) states, "ethnicity is not immutable. It alters its form, its place, and its role in the life of society. New elements appear in its content. Its links with other social phenomena change, posing new questions." These changing phenomena have been described by Warnier (1975) as: ethnic processes", being a situation in which the various societies are constantly changing. This consists in modifying institutions to fall in line with neighbouring peoples, and also with changing fortunes. Notwithstanding the degree of integration and change, ethnicity always leads to ethnic tension and conflict. The Bafut kingdom is no exception.

## **Ethnic Tension and Conflict**

Ethnicity often leads to conflict. This is inevitable under conditions of inter-ethnic competition for scarce valuable resources. It is also inevitable in a situation where one group seeks to perpetuate its dominance over the others. From the history of Bafut partially analysed above, we can detect many factors that breed tension and conflict in its body politic.

**(i) Geographical Factors:** Bafut is topographically demarcated into three zones. There is the upper zone (ntare) autonomous chiefdoms of Bawum, Mambu, Mbibili, Mankanikong, Mankwi and Banji, are located to the south of the capital, Bujong. The other two chiefdoms, Bukari and Buwe located to the northeast are both coincidentally in the highlands. That leaves the capital and the surrounding villages of mumala'a in the depression in the centre. The mumala'a people used the word ntare in a derogatory manner. The ntare people are their source of good raphia palm wine.

Descending still lower is the upper Menchum valley, the mbunti area. The connotation of mbunti is even worse because it signifies conquest and tribute, and the people there do not want to hear the word. The tributes or 'things' that come from here are palm oil, fish and meat. It is literally from mbunti that the palace is supplied. Therefore, the misinterpretation of purely geographical phenomena by human beings does not always breed harmony.

**(ii) Misdistribution of Resources:** Geographical differences imply uneven distribution of resources. As we have seen in (i), the ntare area



produces raphia palm wine. As a savannah zone it also has good hunting ground for game. It also has good roofing grass and raphia bushes for building materials. The mbunti area is forested with a hot climate, very good for oil palms. Its rivers and streams abound with fish. Its forests also have game and other building materials. The centre, mumala'a also produces oil and palm wine but not much. Therefore, the centre must depend on the ntari and mbunti for livelihood. Anything that threatens this livelihood inevitably leads to war. So the Bafut dynasty is always ready at any time to resort to force to insure the continuous flow of 'things' from the subject peoples. The people on the receiving end therefore become xenophobic towards the Bafut.

**(iii) The Conquest State:** The wars waged by Bafut in the nineteenth century altered the ethnic nature of Bafut society. They led to influx of immigrants. In assessing the situation; Warnier (1985), says that the population increased by the addition of conquered people, the assimilation of migrants and a favourable matrimonial balance, that is more wives acquired from outside than given out. Some of the captives were integrated into the governing hierarchy. For example, a certain captive brought from Bugiri, in the Menchum valley was kept to serve as a nchinda. After his years of service, he became ache kwifor, took many wives and had many children. Finally, he became a member of nda nggoro, that is the inner sanctum of kwifo. There were many other cases.

This co-option of foreigners into the Bafut system weakened the influence of the lineages in the system. Subsequently, the lineage organization of Bafut was engulfed and a territorial organization centred on the palace superseded it. This therefore made the Bafut chieftaincy a strong one in contrast to its other Tikar-related counterparts in the grassfields. (iv) **The Relative Powerful Position of the Bafut Fon:** The fact that the Bafut palace could be constantly supplied with victuals coming in as gifts and tribute made the Fon independent and powerful, He was therefore in a position to impose his will on the other chiefs in his realm who were not so fortunate. His position was reinforced by the colonial administration who recognized him as the paramount chief. in the Bafut Native Authority Area which also included Bambui, Nkwen, Mendankwe, Bambili and the two Babankis. The authorities paid him all the respect, close their eyes to his wrong doings and gave him a higher allowance. He was subsequently president of the West Cameroon House of Chiefs. Increasing the Fon's power without considering the traditional context, inevitably caused tension.

**(v) Traditions of Origins:** The traditions concerning the origins of the Bafut dynasty is a constant source of tension, especially in relations between the centre and some of the semi-autonomous chiefdoms. Bawum traditions do



not mention dethronement of Nibachi. According to them the chief in question was Ntoh, their own chief who for unspecified reasons voluntarily handed the paramount position to Aghanjo. For generations there has been tension between the two dynasties, when one of the chiefs of Bawum was murdered in the Bafut Palace shortly before the arrival of the Germans (Chilver and Kaberry, 1967: 19).

## Conclusion

Our investigation so far has shown that the negative aspects of ethnicity usually breeds tension and hence conflicts. These negative traits in the Bafut kingdom have been brought about by geographical factors, the heterogeneity of the population and the policies of the central authority. Again, the manifestations of these traits have taken different dimensions in various periods of Bafut history. In the pre-colonial area, the problem was tempered by a delicate balance that existed as both the government and the governed strived to carry out their mutual obligations to each other. One side paid the tribute while the other offered the protection. But with the advent of colonialism and later the national government, that delicate balance was upset. First of all, the power of the king or paramount ruler was augmented to serve the ends of a new overlord. Protection, albeit, inadequate became the prerogative of the national government. The resultant effect was new tension as both sides strived to adjust themselves to the new situation. This tension has not resulted in any armed conflict, but nevertheless, it has resulted in casualties.

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## **Ethnicity, Violence and Multi-party Democracy in Africa since 1989**

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### **Introduction**

The African continent is made up of multi-ethnic groups. These ethnic groups lived and interacted peacefully with each other through marriage and trade. The European partition of Africa following the Berlin West Africa Conference of November 1884 to February 1885, (Crowe, 1942) marked the emergence of ethnic nationalism. In an effort to maintain peace in the colonies, the colonies adopted the medieval European principles of government (Maning, 1988). To avert opposition to colonial rule, the colons in some colonies perpetuated antagonism within and among some ethnic groups. This was the case in Rwanda between the Tutses and Hutus, and in Cameroon between the Shoa Arabs and the Kotokos. In most cases, they favoured minority groups, rather than the major ethnic groups that were a threat to their authority. From this point, ethnic groups in Africa started perceiving themselves as potential power brokers. This paper will, therefore, discuss how from the colonial era, ethnic -groups were systematically politicized to serve their personal interests rather than the national interest.’ It will also demonstrate that, in post-colonial Africa, those in possession of military and political power have politicized and misused ethnic identities and social disparities to maintain themselves in power. It will also illustrate that those in power have ethicized political parties in an attempt to reduce them to worthless ethnic associations and to block multi-party democracy.

### **Effects of European Partition**

#### **African ethnic groups since 1884**

The conclusions of the Berlin West Africa Conference gave the European imperial powers the green light to effectively partition Africa. The arbitrary partition did not take into account the conglomeration of the existing ethnic groups. Ethnic groups were split in two or more colonies; the case of the

Somali, continuous area partitioned into British, French and Italian colonies; the Yoruba and the Aja each divided between Nigeria, Benin and Togo; the Wolof and the Serers between Senegal and the Gambia (Asiwaju Ai 1984). The boundaries that divided the cultural areas did cut across well-established lines of communication. This entailed, in most cases, cutting across a dominant or active sense of community based on traditions and common ancestry, with strong kinship ties that shared socio-political institutions and economic resources, common customs and practices, and sometimes acceptance of a common political control.

Further balkanization, which arose routinely from the mere location of artificial boundaries, set in motion by different states, further pulled apart partitioned ethnic groups. These processes have tended to make the partitioned ethnic groups to look in different political, economic and social directions because of the distinct policies which the various states pursued in matters of trade and currency, politics and administration, ideology and education (Asiwaju, 1976).

By setting up administrative structures in the various nation-states, ethnic groups were further partitioned. Thus, ethnic conflicts emerged as far back as the colonial period when the colonial administration favoured particular ethnic groups over others. Such favouritism did not have a scientific justification as in Rwanda. The colonial policy of divide-and-rule by investing administrative powers into the hands of minority ethnic group sowed seeds of ethnic conflicts in Africa. Ethnicity thus became a political tool that regimes used to govern and stay in power. Although during the fight for decolonization, ethnic groups were mobilized by nationalists for the Liberation struggle, which, according to Frantz Fanon (1964), had a legal justification; these ethnic affiliations remained a destructive element to national integration and development after decolonization. The immediate post-colonial governments ran into this syndrome leading to the establishment of the worse dictatorships, the world had ever witnessed: Siad Barre of Somalia and Mobuto of Zaire, to mention a few.

### **The emergence of multiparty democracy and ethnic violence**

The emergence of multiparty democracy after decades of one-party dictatorship was unanimously welcomed. The democratic forces emerged when the continent was plagued by the economic recession. Dictatorial governments and bad governance were singled out as the remote causes of the said recession. The end of the cold war, the collapse of the Berlin wall and the events in Eastern Europe motivated the middle class in Africa to call for democratically elected governments. Following this wind of change which was

a deadly political influenza to the dictators ethnic conflicts suddenly came to the fore. Thus, the new and emerging issues took on an increasing ethnic character, because political leaders found it relatively easy to mobilize the masses by stimulating a sense of collective identity (Carment, 1994). The appeals of new political leaders were crucial in the ousting of the entrenched elite (Seidman, 1992). Never in the history of the continent had the people wielded such extensive power above ethnic affinities in the quest for liberalization and democratization: upbraiding the state and mandating to destroy itself; but with a humanizing motive, the revolutionary competence. They learnt to revolt against the absolute inclinations of their leaders. The universal quest for good governance through democratically elected leaders was a pointer to the revolutionary competence of the new man (Nwankwo, 1992). The advocacy for democratization was the concern of all the underprivileged people, irrespective of race or ethnic group. In some countries, the rallying cry of multiparty democracy culminated in something other than effective pluralism; which led to an upsurge in rampant ethnic pluralism, elite replacement or the shattering of fragile democratic institutions. With the emergence of democratization, political scientists have projected that with the current geopolitical “map”, there is a high potential degree for ethnic politics to become even more pervasive (Carment, *ibid*). The economic crisis, which they attribute to bad governance, did affect the masses without exception. The application of the World Bank Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) led to mass retrenchments and company shut-downs that led to redundancy, salary cuts, devaluation and inflation, frustration and a rise in crime (Heraut and Adesanmi, 1997). The calls of emerging new political leaders to overthrow dictatorial governments democratically ran across ethnic barriers and national frontiers.

The wealth of the various countries was in the hands of the ruling class, who through corruption had used the army, police and judiciary to stay in power. The new political leaders who emerged in the 1990s, thus, found their disciples and followers mostly in urban centres that were the worse hit by the economic crisis than the rural areas. The mass mobilization to undo tyranny in the entire continent did not evoke ethnic sentiments, but was a rallying force to undo the evil that had plagued the people the Marxist perspective of class struggle.

In several countries of Africa, the wind of change was rather abrupt and the rulers were not adequately prepared to adopt wider popular political participation. But as Susungi (1992) observed, the virus was able to breed and multiply faster because the political conditions were ripe and waiting. Those who held political power perceived opposing views as treacherous and

reasonable. To them, democratization meant the beginning of social conflicts, the rediscovery of ethnicity, migration and displacement. They could not envisage that despotic regimes, like any form of matter, is destined to sub serve the cyclical law of history. To maintain themselves in power; these rulers terrorized, harassed and intimidated the powerless. In some cases, real and imaginary political opponents were eliminated to halt the democratization process. Invariably, repressive and alienating violence therefore became politicized. The case of Rwanda, Burundi, the Congas, Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Kenya are textbook examples of this trend (Osaghae, 1995).

The emergence of multiparty politics in Africa, therefore, surfaced with serious political power struggles between stakeholders. During this epoch, power brokers preyed on their ethnic background to drum up political gains. At the heart of the matter lies the deeply engrained pattern of social inequality and exclusion within African societies. This refers not only to the problem of widespread poverty, but to the overall syndrome of systematic exclusion from livelihood resources (Gobs, security, freedom, land), from public welfare schemes, from political participation and, more so, from the state as a collective social and cultural construct. This syndrome is based on various combinations of class and ethnic divisions and is further complicated by the persistent significance of potential links that can determine whether one is 'in' or 'out' in terms of effective citizenship.

The violent ethnic conflicts witnessed in IIfel, Western Nigeria between the Modakeke of Ogun State and julta of Ondo State in April 1991 and March 1977, in Kenya between the Kikuyus and the people of Migori District of Nyanza Province in 1997, the civil wars in Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Angola, the Congos, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, just to cite a few; are societal crises emanating from the politicization and misuse of ethnic identities and disparities mostly by those in possession of military and political power (Nyong'o, 1993; Diouf, 1995).

## **Multipartism and Ethnicity**

In 1990, as the demand for multiparty democracy intensified; most of those in power decided to advocate ethnicity for political mileage. This was purely to drum up support for their personal interest, because multiparty democratic systems are on the contrary supposed to resolve ethnic animosities and tribalism. The liberalization of the political front in several African countries like Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda; Sierra Leone and the Congos did not respond to the above theoretical perceptions.

Political activity since 1990 shows that when Multi-partism was introduced, political parties tended to develop along ethnic lines; in Kenya, for example, the ruling Kenya Africa National Union (KANU) led by Arab Moi became the party of the Kalenjins and the Minority tribes, Mr. Ogiga Odinga led the FORD Kenya party associated with the LuoNyanza tribes and Mr Nwai Kibaki and Mr Kenneth Matiba led the two Kikuyu political parties the Democratic party (DP) and FORD Asili party. In Cameroon, since the November 1990 bill on Rights and Freedoms was promulgated, the number of political parties in Cameroon as of April 1999 stood at 161. It should be recalled that the population of Cameroon as of 1995 stood at 12.9 million (Jeune Afrique Economie Hors series Aout 1995). At this rate of legalizing political parties, it is estimated by politically minded Cameroonians that by the year 2000 the number of political parties will be around 200. In this case, the 200 parties correspond to the 200 ethnic groups in Cameroon.

In Cameroon therefore, the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) of Mr. Biya became the Beti party; the Social Democratic Front (SDF) led by Ni John Fru Ndi was personified as the Anglo-Bami Party; the Union des Populations (UPC) Bassa; Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU) led by Dr AdamuNdam Njoya, Bamoun; National Union for Democracy and Progress (UNDP) led by Maigari Bello Bouba Hausa/Fulani party of the Grand North (Kontchou Kouemegni, in interview, 1993), to cite a few.

However, this syndrome of running political parties on ethnic lines is more common in former French colonies of Sub-Saharan Africa. There is no country in this French community that has less than 20 legalized political parties. The Republic of Chad with a population of 6.2 million, as of June 1999, had 60 legalized political parties. By legalizing political parties on ethnic bases; African dictators had, in no small way, weakened the opposition and blocked the processes of democratization. In francophone Africa, the tacit transformation of political parties into ethnic associations by those in power had greatly antagonized ethnic groups as the unprivileged ethnic groups are relegated to the back and perceived as the enemies of the state. The ethnicization of political parties in most countries had disintegrated the opposition. This has been further aggravated by the absorption of fragile parties into the presidential majority. This phenomenon marks a gradual return to the one-party system in sheepskin of multiparty democracy. By politicizing ethnicity to fight democracy, African dictators have legalized tribalism and killed efficiency. The reawakened ethnic nationalism which they suppressed during the one-party system resurfaced and entered all fabrics of the society. in Cameroon, politicization of ethnicity to block democracy led to the categorization of Cameroonians into "les autochtones" (indigenes) and



“allogenes” (settlers). Before the 1997 presidential elections, this sparked a wave of ethnic violence between the indigenes of the South West Province supporters of CPDM and settlers from the North West presumed to be supporters of the SDF. The North Westerners who were now considered as settlers in their own country were stigmatized as ‘come no go’. In Kumba, Chief Mukete, supported by the administration, instituted residence permits; North Westerners had to obtain a residence permit before living in that part of the country and had no right to vote. This was ethnicity at work and it all happened under the watchful eyes of the army, police and the judiciary that had become auxiliary organs of the ruling CPDM party.

## Conclusion

### **The blockage of multiparty democracy**

The use of ethnicity to fight multipartism by African dictators has had far-reaching effects on individuals and the nation. In the globalization world, multiparty democracy must go across ethnic and linguistic barriers. We cannot talk of regional integration and eventual African integration by the year 2035, if national interests do not go above ethnic interests. Ethnicisation has killed thought and reason, dynamism and efficiency, and therefore patriotism. It has destroyed state cohesion and promoted tribalism. On the other hand, the study of ethnicity and multipartism put researchers in a difficult position to explain the prevailing peaceful co-existence in multi-ethnic Tanzania, while mono-ethnic Somalia is being torn apart by inter-clan warfare. These are just some of the challenging questions confronting social scientists and theoreticians, as pertains to the analysis of ethnicity, multiparty democracy and good governance. The entire continent witnessed the dangers of ethnic politicization in Rwandan and Burundi and any dictator that, instead of democratization, advocates ethnic malaise is setting that nation on a destructive path.

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## An Anthropologist's View of Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts in Africa

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### Abstract

*The paper takes an idiographic view of Ethnicity. It notes that from the onset, ethnicity was never a negative term; for it denotes an extreme consciousness of and loyalty to a particular linguistic and cultural group unidentified with any other group. It was during the process of nation-building that ethnicity assumed its negative connotation. Using Liberia, Somalia, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Lesotho as examples, the paper argues that ethnic sentiments have done a lot of harm to Africa as a continent. The paper noted that since this sentiment is normally displayed in cities as different ethnic groups meet to work; the city should also be the initial place to diffuse ethnic ethical values. The paper tensions through formal education and imbibing of progressive further argues that as these remedies are being implemented social network culture will automatically be progressive in all its ramifications.*

### Introduction

Ethnicity has not been a negative term from the onset. The traditional African societies played their politics within ethnic boundaries. In that pre-colonial period, the distribution of political offices, rights and privileges was determined by the tradition and customs of the people. Every community had a ruling house and non-ruling house. Ogbu (1998:55) argued that during the pre-colonial period, the political process in Africa was orderly and peaceful. There were no political parties, no organized opposition, no economically determined classes or intense competition for power, since the distribution of power was exclusively based on hereditary criteria. Politics in this period precluded election and the accompanying rigging, bribery and thuggery. The democratic elections in most African countries that preceded the hand-over of power from the colonial masters to the African political class were keenly contested and could be termed the only free and fair election since then. Many

of those who rushed into politics to make a fortune lost out at the elections. In the words of Leaner (1963), their experience resulted in a 'revolution of rising frustrations.' They soon realized that, to hang on, they should resort to unorthodox and innovative ways of playing politics. The best bet became appealing to ethnic sentiments.

Ethnicity denotes an extreme consciousness of and loyalty to a particular linguistic and cultural group unidentified with any other group (Udoh 1998:38). Such groups usually possess myth of origin, traceable to an epical ancestor or ancestress. With a strong ruling house such ethnic groups like the Yoruba, Edo, Fante were able to organize themselves into Empire or Kingdoms, conquering and incorporating other lesser ethnic groups as vassals. With the coming of colonial masters treaties were signed with such kingdoms wherever they existed; especially during the 17th and 18th centuries (Bradbury et al 1965; Igbafe 1972).

### **Origin of ethnicity in Africa**

The Colonial officers had their own agenda and so the nation-states they brought into being such as Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Angola, Cameroon, did not take into cognizance the ethnic demarcations. Indeed, four hundred West African ethnic groups were brought together to form modern-day Nigeria (Okonkwo 1978) while seventy-three ethnic groups were brought together in Central Africa to form Northern Rhodesia i.e. present-day Zambia (BBC 1999 Jan 26 Network). As these persons from the different ethnic groups find themselves working together under the colonial civil service, they compete for a few positions, resorting to unorthodox methods and leaning more on their relatives for support to undo others (Sklar 1960). In such a social system, one's tribe becomes important, since individuals could easily be recognized through their ancestral origins. Murdock (1959:30) describes a tribe as a community of individuals living in a designated area; who speak the same language and possess the same or similar customs and traditions. Tribe members form a distinct group of their own. In modern nation-states where many people compete for the few civil service and parastatal jobs, ethnicity takes different forms depending on circumstances, Doro and Stultz (1970:13) have even observed that the definition of an ethnic group may derive from a common occupation; like Blacksmiths or even dress rather than a common language or traditional polity. For example in spite of the numerous ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria, Southerners see everybody putting on a flowing gown Babariga as a Hausa man. Ethnicity could even be defined in terms of clan or religion. Where a nation-state is made up of almost a homogenous group as in

Somalia or Lesotho, competitors fall back on clan membership (as the present Somali war lords) for political backing, or on religion as the BNP leaders in Lesotho in 1957 (Gill 1993:211 ).

Ethnicity in post-colonial Africa is principally a response to the new social structure the indigenous people found themselves in during the colonial era and at independence. The cultural upbringing is seriously at variance with the social processes of the modern era. Bohannan (1957) speaks of the philosophy of limited good among the TIV of Nigeria. All goods are and so the possession of a good by one person is the loss of that good by another. This concept is applicable to every tribe in most circumstances. Ethnic discrimination has its root in the favouritism shown to kin group members as could be seen from the principle of segmentary opposition among the Tiv of Nigeria (Bohannan 1969) or Nuer of Southern Sudan (Evans-Pritchard 1940)

**Table 1: Segmentary Opposition among Nuer People**

| A | X              | B              |
|---|----------------|----------------|
|   | X <sub>1</sub> | Y <sub>1</sub> |
|   | X <sub>2</sub> | Z <sub>1</sub> |
|   |                | Z <sub>2</sub> |

Source:  
 Evans-Pritchard E.E. (1940). “The Nuer of Southern Sudan” In, M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard (Eds) African Political Systems

The principle of segmentary opposition as seen among the Nuer of Southern Sudan or the TIV of middle belt Nigeria is now virtually a wide spread practice among ethnic groups in Africa. A man from Fadang section of the Bor tribe of Sudan said “we fight against the Rengyan but when either of us is fighting a third party we combine with them (Evans - Pritchard 1940:145).

In table I, Z1 fights Z2 with no much interference from others. But when Z1 fights Y1; Z1 and Z2 unite as Y2. When Y1 fights X1, Y1 and Y1 unite and so do X1 and X2. When X1 fights A; X1, X2, Y1 and Y2 unite as B. So when A of the Nuer raids the Dimka of Sudan (another ethnic group), A and B may unite.

As said earlier, the emerging trend in ethnicity among Africans is that even within the same ethnic group, close cousins discriminate against distant

cousins, while all cousins come together against non-cousins in the wider political scene because they all compete for the limited economic resources of their post-colonial nations.

Nwanunobi (1992: 17) noted that the incorporation of the various indigenous African peoples into modern states, characterized by specialized institutions and agencies with relatively impersonal bureaucracies, has meant an attenuation of the opportunity to utilize kinship links in their traditional sense. Udoh (1998:43) also argued that in Nigeria, the old colonial urban centres aided by the rural migration, constitute the cradle of contemporary ethnicity. It is in the urban centres and urban establishments that ethnic groups acquire a common consciousness and perceive themselves as a separate and autonomous group. Lloyd (1967:288-303) even noted that it was after the colonization of Nigeria that the term Yoruba land; Igbo land and Hausa land came into frequent usage. The colonial and rural origin of ethnicity therefore becomes obvious when it is realized that the phenomenon cannot exist unless individuals from the various ethnic backgrounds in a nation are in constant contact with one another in bureaucratic organizations commerce politics, et cetera.

### **Ethnic conflicts and abuses in perspective**

Healand (1969) has argued vehemently that ethnic conflicts are generally related to factors associated with competition for environmental resources. This paper identifies the main cause of ethnic problems and their attendant abuses in Africa to be the nature of contact between Africa and the colonial West; and the enduring legacies of such contact. This problem has ignited other problems like inequality in socio-economic and political orientations among different ethnic groups of a country; the apparent intensification of the politics of tribal differentiation in the various administrative arms of government and the pervasive socio-economic insecurity of the so-called minority ethnic groups. This problem also overshoot national boundaries thus leading to constant animosity and wars between African countries, especially since some ethnic groups and their economic resources were abruptly bifurcated into two countries by the erstwhile colonial masters in Nigeria, for example, prior to independence every major ethnic group became conscious of the need to be together in order to gain as a unit. The Ibibio union was formed in 1928, the Igbo state Union in 1934, the Pan-Yoruba Organization “Egbe Omo Oduduwa” in 1945; while the Yam ‘Lyar Mutanen Arewa’ - Northern Peoples’ Congress was inaugurated in Kano in 1949. In the middle belt, the Birom Progressive Union was formed in 1950 (Udoh 1998:45).



Indeed Eyo Ita felt in 1945 that these ethnic associations were not healthy for Nigeria as an emerging nation.

*He observed that "we need a magic wand of nature that can create a Universal Kinship among us, that all Nigerians are fellow citizens... the greatest need of Nigerians today is to become a community ... to evolve a national self-hood. (Coleman 1960:219).*

Eyo Ita admonished Nigerians to seek coordination among themselves in a way that would help to build a strong national consciousness. In what appeared to be the first test of consolidation after becoming a republic, Nigeria experienced ethnic genocide due to unhealthy political rivalry. Over half a million Igbo were killed in Northern Nigeria following the 1966 January 15; Coup led by Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu on Ibo, accused of killing the Northern leader Sir Ahmadu Belo. This later resulted in the Biafran secession and the Nigerian Civil war July, 1967 - 1970 January (Paden 1973; Luckham 1971; Depress 1975; Harris 1972; Wolpe 1974 Salamone 1975, Smock 1971).

Even the Rwanda genocide of 1994 is another pogrom bigger in proportion than the Ibo massacre of 1966 - 67 (Luckham 1971; Paden 1973, Lloyd 1974; Newbury 1995). Like in other African nations, political resources were monopolized by the Hutu ethnic - led government to the exclusion of the Tutsi and Twa. In 1994, over 800,000 Rwandan Tutsi were finally massacred in what was probably thought or conceived to be once and for all elimination of the Tutsi threat. Sympathetic allies especially Uganda assisted the Tutsi to overthrow the Hutu government in July 1994, in what should be seen as ethnic replacement. The end of the power tussle is not yet in sight but the present Tutsi government is not taking chances.

In what looked like a show of toughness, President William Tolbert of Liberia did not accord equal opportunity to the sixteen ethnic groups in his country (Ofuatey Kodjoe 1994:261). He favoured mainly American Liberians and this abuse led master sergeant Doe to overthrow him in a military coup d'état. Samuel Doe himself did not learn from the mistakes of Tolbert. He equally favoured only the Krahn ethnic group, thus marginalizing others, especially the Gio and Mino tribes. Incidentally, these two tribes were mainly used by Charles Taylor in his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) to undermine Doe's government (Tison 1991).

Fedarko (1997:24) argues that ethnicity is the problem behind Democratic Republic of Congo's decades of unrest. Since 1960 Zaire has been in conflict with Shaba (Katanga) a copper rich province attempting to secede. Kinshasa put Katanga in check even with the assistance of French troops as in 1977 and 1988. Ethnic Banyamulenge Tutsi nursed secession too. President Mobutu has

been blamed for denying them their basic rights. Little wonder Laurent Kabila was supported by Tutsi and other offended ethnic groups in the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFC) in the campaign against Mobutu.

Even where people think that countries like Somalia and Lesotho are homogenous and provide examples of ever peaceful nations in African, we find that emphasis is now placed on clan loyalties and Religion, respectively, as divide measures. Adam (1995:72) noted that General Siyad (Siarrd) Barre's divide and rule tactics and partisanship fuelled inter-clan animosity and vendetta. His was a lineage and final rule, especially as Barre's son-in-law dominated the country's politics. From them came the Secret Police, military intelligence, and holders of top political and administrative posts. Others faced repression and summary execution, where necessary. Indeed, Lewis (1988:222) predicted the internal warfare of the 1990s which is obviously Barre's ending legacy; a phenomenon that has branded Somalia lawless, notoriously a cephalous and ungovernable.

Lesotho's democratic experiment ended in 1970 and BCP's victory, though merited, was rejected by the Catholic-backed Prime Minister Chief Leabua Jonathan (Gill 1993:211-222, 241). The Prime Minister on the advice of his close ministers' -Maseribane and Peete felt that BCP with secular constitution and "little respect" for Chieftaincy institution ought not to have won the election by such a clear majority of 36 seats to their BNP 23. He declared a state of emergency in January 1970 suspended the constitution and arrested most BCP members. The Prime Minister continued in this dictatorial fashion until he was overthrown sixteen years later on 20th January 1986 by Major general Metsing Lekhanya. This divide based on religion and chieftaincy had continued to lead to violence in Lesotho. BNP's rejection of the BCP victory in 1998 led to the riots and Arson of September/October 1998. SADC intervention and the near destruction of the capital city Maseru by looters purporting to be supporters of the BNP are a part of the legacy of intolerance in Lesotho politics. There are catalogues of recent abuses in Guinea-Bissau, South Africa, Congo-Brazzaville, Angola, Sierra Leone that space will not permit one to dwell upon but in all the cases ethnicity in one form or the other is the root cause of the crisis.

### **Which way out in the new millennium**

This paper has observed that ethnicity is mainly an urban phenomenon and its solution must be largely urban in outlook. Ethnicity is a very virulent disease that cannot be wiped out overnight. It requires a long process of

education, Ethical orientation based on social justice, fair play and nationality, and finally, social networking.

## **Education**

It is our belief that education is the most potent force that can liberate most Africans from the ignorance, deceit and suspicions that characterize social relations in multi-ethnic societies. Except in Lesotho (UNICEF 1998) more males than females attend schools in African countries. For various reasons including patriarchy, marriage betrothals, Religion, and poverty, the rate of school dropouts was about 40 percent in the 1990s. No country in Africa can today boast of a 60 per cent literacy rate. This leaves more than half of the continent open to ethnic manipulation and decent in the hands of a few well-to-do disgruntled politicians. Education makes someone to be broad-minded. It makes one to be critical, logical and rational in the approach to issues. An educated individual cannot just accept any information about other individuals without asking questions. If every African country enforces compulsory education for its citizens to Junior Secondary School level, Africans will then have the basic tool to cooperate with one another. An illiterate can never understand what democracy entails. Patriotism to such a person could only mean favouring the candidate from the nearest lineage in his or her ethnic group. Such a person can never be open to discharge his duties in any bureaucratic set up. Redfield (1947) argues that people of this category are of the folk culture, lack systematic knowledge, believe in personal relations, and are largely emotional. Talcott parsons (1951) has stressed that Education helps members to behave appropriately. It helps them to fit into roles expected of them. An enlightened Office Messenger in a parastatal or civil service should understand his limited role (specificity) and should treat everybody or client with the same measure, not favouring his relatives (i.e. Universalism), knowing that he was employed because of his qualification and not because of his connections (i.e. achievement) and therefore should give equal attention to everyone, irrespective of a person's ethnic origin (affective neutrality), especially as he ought to be concerned mainly with his own needs (i.e. self-orientation).

Education liberates one from servile attitudes, indecisions and irrationality. It makes a person regenerated and in a position to take a stand. Fafunwa (1974) has observed that education prepares a person for leadership at every level. He also observed that education makes one mobile, closes social distance between individuals and makes one rational. Only an educated person can appreciate a politician's objective view point especially when that politician

hails from another ethnic group. African governments have started to tackle the problem of ethnicity, but how the problem could be brought to its barest minimum without massive education of the citizenry is the problem. Ogbu (1998:57) observes that in Nigeria, for example, the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides that for one to become the President of the country, one must obtain at least a two-thirds majority vote of at least two-thirds of the states of the Federation. This is to ensure that a President is not just supported by one or two ethnic groups, but is somebody whose popularity and acceptability cut across ethnic boundaries. Besides, the intermittent creation of more states in Nigeria is to diffuse some of the ethnic problems and to allay the fear of domination of the minority ethnic groups by the majority ethnic groups. Similarly, the introduction of the Federal character formula in the distribution of the national resources; the establishment of Unity schools (Federal Government Colleges) and the introduction of National Youths Service Corps in 1973, are all aimed at diffusing ethnic sentiments between the various ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Unfortunately, some of these policies aimed at mitigating ethnic hostility have inadvertently reinforced ethnic consciousness. For example, creation of more states in Nigeria has reinforced ethnic identity and cleavages. Similarly, tribesmen in urban areas are depended upon by job-seekers to use their privileged positions as government officials to get them jobs.

In spite of the foregoing education is still the key to the understanding of one's position, and one's interrelationship with others. Education will reduce ethnic prejudices and bring cultural differences to the fore. Once such understanding is taking place in the country's metropolis, the effect will trickle down to the rural ethnic groups, as more rural areas receive modern education. Without this education as the infrastructure, all ethical reorientation campaigns on honesty, social justice, fair play, such as War Against Indiscipline (WAI) of 1983/84 in Nigeria, et cetera, will not achieve their goals.

### **Social networking**

It is our contention that, once the required minimum educational level is achieved in any African country, the social network perspective would definitely be a methodology for mitigating or improving ethnic relations. In a community of educated people, a person treats every other person as important, irrespective of ethnic affiliations (universalism) without even the slightest discrimination (affective neutrality) since actors are concerned with their personality and self-respect (self-orientation). Indeed, every actor sees himself as an individual. According to Rand (1964:38) to be an individualist is

to be “a man who lives for his own sake and by his own mind, sacrificing neither himself to others nor others to himself. He deals with man as an honest trader not as a looter; as a producer, not as an Attila.” Udoh 91998:47) argues that an individualist is first and foremost a man of reason. Men who reject the responsibility of thought and reason exist only as parasites on the thinking of others and may only be induced to practice what others think.

Indeed, we should see individualism as a progressive trait for it does not consist merely in rejecting the belief that a man should live for the tribal group; the individualist uses his reason to determine right and wrong, what is true or false. In a community of individualists, people rise up en masse to condemn barbaric acts. For example, the European Community has utterly condemned Serbian President’s (Slobodan Milosevic’s) ethnic cleansing of the two million Kosovo Albanians from Yugoslavia Republic. According to NATO sources, within a year, more than 760,000 Kosovar Albanians had fled the Serbs’ campaign of ethnic cleansing (South African Sunday Times 1999, April 4 page I). The European Union under the NATO alliance has been responding adequately to stop Yugoslavia from committing such atrocities, thus ridding the Balkans of ethnic sentiments.

Once this level of “cohesive individualism” has been attained, social networking can then be used to see how well individuals relate in large-scale societies.

Social networking is more of a methodology than a theory. The author finds it particularly useful in the study of complex societies, especially urban settings where the traditional techniques for studying small rural societies; particularly description of kinship and other institutions, are inappropriate (Uzzell and Provencher 1976:61). Most accounts of the development of network analysis place its formal origin with a publication by Barnes (1954) but others say it is an older notion. According to Wolfe (1970:229) a social network is any model in which actors are linked in social situations. He refers to any part of that network as a set; and thus identifies 5 sets:

- i) Personal set - limited to the links of one person;
- j) Categorical set - limited to links involving a type of person;
- k) Action set - limited to links purposefully created for a specific end;
- l) Role system set - limited to links involved in an organized role system;
- m) Field set - limited to links (relationships) of a certain kind;

These categories will definitely call for certain explanations but what should really be of major interest to Anthropologists should not be static structures but the ways in which individuals and groups manipulate the parts of the structures that affect them. Aronson 91970:262) explains this by saying:

*... “we want to know how (action sets)... are selected from extended networks, that is how “assets” or “resources” or “social capital” are converted to use in particular situations. What are the relative values of assets he has, and what restrictions are placed on their conversion? Why more specifically are some ties more potent than others? (Action sets) in this sense are clearly the result or embodiment of purposive strategies and choice making (in allocating line, cultivating linkages, cementing alliances, proffering deference and so on) which are the key assumptions in Berth’s optative theory of society. (Aronson 1970:262).*

Networks have been studied by a variety of methods. Sociometrists are interested in friendship cliques, leadership and association for task performance. They ask individuals about whom they prefer to associate with or avoid in a particular situation. Peil (1977:65) observed that this method was successfully used by the Volta Resettlement Authority in Ghana to give villagers displaced by the Volta Dam a chance to choose which resettlement village they would go to; which families would like to continue living together. Another type of network study uses participant observation and detailed interviews to trace all the key members of a chosen individual’s network as an aid to explaining his behaviour. A successful business man will have wide variety of individuals included in his network. These may be in categories with some falling into more than one category (i.e. a client who is also an affine and a co-church deacon).

Peil (1977) observes that the businessman’s behaviour in any given situation can be explained in terms of single and multiple role relationships between himself and other participants. In a large-scale society, it will be necessary to focus on his partial networks and this could be done by examining his relationships within a particular event such as wedding, funeral, election or dispute or one can look at relationship between individuals within a particular organization.

Interest in social networks has developed in response to the inadequacy of structural/functional theories for analysing relationships in large-scale societies. Mitchell (1966:51 - 5) suggests that three types of social relationships must be distinguished: structural, categorical and personal. Within the structural, behaviour is interpreted according to the position an individual holds within a corporate group: family, association or workplace. Mitchell (1966:51 - 5) also says that in an unstructured situation, behaviour is interpreted in terms of social stereotypes such as sex, age, or ethnicity. He says that in a situation where we must deal with strangers without a common structure or culture, we usually interact in terms of categorical identification: not as an individual but as a type. In addition to these types, Peil (1977:67)



adds that behaviour in either structured or unstructured situations may be based on personal links between individuals: ties of kinship, friendship, neighbourhood, et cetera. She further explains that in attempting to move from social reality in particular situations to abstract generalizations about behaviour, we need to examine the structural, categoric and/or personal aspects in order to fully understand the meaning of behaviour to the individuals involved. Thus the study of social networks (the personal order or set) provides an important dimension of analysis especially in studies of social change concerning ethnicity and ethnic conflicts in Africa.

Mitchel (1972:26) applauds network research for being particularly useful for studying normative behaviour because members of a network constantly evaluate the behaviour of other members and press them to uphold the norms of the group or community. Mayers (1961) report, specifically illustrates the normative quality of networks. He found that Xhosa migrants to East London, South Africa could be divided into two types according to the nature of the networks, they established in town. He called these 'Red' and 'school' referring to the red blanket traditional Xhosa wear and the fact that most of those in the second category had attended school. The Reds built up close-knit networks of people from the same rural area, encapsulating themselves against urban influence. Members are under considerable pressure to conform to traditional norms and remain essentially conservative in their approach to urban life (Peil 1977:75). The school Xhosa on the other hand has accepted schooling and Christianity and tends to use whites as a reference group. Their networks are loose-knit and often based on single-stranded links. They are therefore more open to influences of cultural change. Some 'Reds' become 'school' in town and their social networks change. Education, as earlier said, will make the big difference in one's attitudes towards people from other ethnic groups and this will certainly be reflected in one's networks.

## **Concluding Remarks**

The arguments and observations made above by seasoned scholars prove that ethnicity, though deeply rooted was not initially a dysfunctional phenomenon. The competitive spirit between different ethnic groups following the coming into being of nation-states engendered this unhealthy rivalry which has manifested itself in different ways - Ethnic strife, clan tussles, religious struggles, etc. Since the war theatre for ethnicity is mostly the new urban African centres where the different people of different ethnic groups meet for business, it is essential that the norms and values of friendship, social justice, respect for one another, etc., be cultivated. Education has proved to be



a valuable asset in bringing such culturally diverse peoples together. It helps purge their minds of the biases, prejudices and other ethnocentric values imbibed during Socialization process. With high societal level of Education, the new values of oneness, progress or pattern variables of development (Parsons 1951) will eventually emerge and even trickledown to rural centres of population. This will manifest in the high quality of social network of individuals and the society in which individuals find themselves will be a better place to live in.

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## **Ethnic Conflict, Social Dislocation and the Search for a New Order in Africa**

**T. Ebijuwa**

In the explanation of the socio-political crisis in Africa, one factor which has continued to surface is the phenomenon of ethnicity. The term ethnicity, following Abner Cohen, refers to strife between ethnic groups in the course of which people stress their identity and exclusiveness (1969:4). The dominant view is that the cause of ethnic strife in Africa is the socio-cultural configuration of Africa and the fact of the divisive tendency of ethnic or tribal plurality (Nnoli 1980: Ekeh 1980: Osaghae 1992). Against this background is the view that the divisive structure of ethnic groups is one of the "several manifestations of a more fundamental problem on the socio-political landscape in Africa (Uroh 1998: 94). According to this view, ethnicity is not the cause but a consequence of a more serious problem in Africa. This problem is that "ethnic conflicts in Africa are a product of the declining capacity of the state in Africa to justify its existence by pursuing the common good" (Ibid.). This is to say that it is because the state has failed to fulfil its obligations that its citizens are seeking social fulfilment in their primordial enclaves.

This paper is a development of these two dominant opinions on the question of ethnic conflict in Africa. By development, we mean whichever way we may want to look at the two opposing views above, they do not undermine the fact of the existence of diverse ethnic groups and the fact that from time to time these groups conflict with one another. Our contention here is not with the fundamental problem of what has been identified as regime legitimization (Uroh 1998: 94), but rather that of how, in spite of the diversity of ethnic groupings and their attendant conflicts, we can harmonize our differences and live like brothers. We believe that it is only after we have effectively managed our differences that the whole question of the legitimacy of the state in Africa can be meaningful. This means that even if the state is responsive to the common good of the society, because of the socio-cultural differences in African societies, social relations will not annihilate ethnic conflict. In other words, "because our societies comprise a multitude of religions, ethnic ... groups with competing interests, competing values and needs, conflict is inevitable and natural to most societies" (West Africa,

1996:939). if conflict is inevitable in this sense, then “the challenge is how to develop within African political processes, institutions and cultures that can mediate these competitions peacefully routinely in a way that does not plunge our society into the spiral of conflict and violence” (ibid:938). This is because societies throughout the world which are stable are not those with an absence of conflict, but rather those which are able to manage conflicts in stable ways. The question to ask at this juncture is how; in spite of the diversity of ethnic or tribal groups and their values in African societies can we effectively manage ethnic conflicts?

Before we begin to look into the issue of the management of ethnic conflict, let us first see how these conflicts are generated in Africa. Many answers no doubt vie for attention. We shall, however, be concerned with two here. The first one is what we may call the colonial dimension in the crisis of the African state and the implication of this on social cohesion and national development.

There is no doubt about the fact that ideas vary about the structures and institutions bequeathed to us by our colonizers has been suggested that it is not the case that ethnic crisis in Africa is a product of the way ethnic groups were, as a result of colonial conquest, chaotically crammed into African states (Ake, 1993: 32, Uroh, 1998:98). The reasoning here is that to assert the above is to say that there is something inherently conflictual about social or cultural pluralism (Uroh 1998; 98). This is because there are some culturally plural societies that do not have or are not as crisis-ridden as African Societies. Yes, this is correct, but it is equally misleading in the sense that if we look at the issue in this light, we are likely to overlook the intention of the colonizers concerning state formation and its implication for social cohesion. According to Oladipo, “what the colonizers did with regard to state formation was to combine the ‘territories of formerly distinct people’ to form colonial territories (1998: 108); a thing which was done because they needed to separate the sphere of influence of different European rulers (Ade Ajavi 1992:8). In other words, the aim of the colonizers was not the creation of new states in the colonies for social and economic development; rather in the words of Oladipo, the demarcation was meant to “ensure that colonial control and dispossession could be achieved without undue rivalry among colonizers (ibid). Hugh Clifford, Nigeria’s colonial Governor in the 1920s, also attest to the facts that the idea of “claiming together of territories of formerly distinct peoples to form colonial territories” was a deliberate policy of the colonizers. He told the members of the National Council for British West Africa that he was:

*convinced of the rights, for example, of the people of Egbaland ... of any of the great Emirates of the North ... to maintain that each one of them is, in a sense, a nation .. (and that) it is the task of the government of Nigeria to build and fortify these national institutions. (cited in Coleman, 1958:194).*

The above indicate the colonizer's recognition of the differences of the many ethnic groups they claimed together, the implication of which was the dispossession of the people of those values and practices which hitherto served as vehicles for social identity and cohesion. The point of this "cultural and social dispossession" was to put the people of the colonies under a term of control that would make them unable to question colonial practices and the assumptions on which they were based (Oladipo 1998:108). For the colonialist, to do the contrary would mean to "mould one citizenry from the many peoples" (Ibid) which will amount to the "formulation of policies whose implementation would be geared towards the development of a new consensus among the various peoples they brought together to form new colonial territories" (Ibid). This is an option the colonizers were not prepared to accept because it could eventually be used to question the legitimacy of their authority. Hence, the colonizers adopted the divide-and-rule system in their territories which sufficiently disunited the people in their colonies.

Governor Clifford emphasized this disunity in 1920 when he said that his administration would seek to secure:

*to each separate people the right to maintain its identity, its individuality and its nationality, its chosen form of government, and the peculiar political and social institutions which have been evolved for it by the wisdom and the accumulated experiences of generations of its forebears. (Coleman, p. 194).*

This emphasis on the separation of ethnic groups created a new sense of communal identity for the people where none existed, and provided a new symbolic and ethnocentric focus for each group. This, of course, did not only complicate the task of welding diverse elements in each colony into a coherent whole, it also became the "source of many life-threatening conflicts which were to proliferate, and consequently, impede the process of community development, in many African countries a few decades after independence" (Oladipo 1998:109). We have examples of these conflicts in Liberia, Somalia, Zaire, Rwanda, Burundi, Algeria, Congo, Sudan and recently in Sierra Leone.

In all, we can say that the "divide-and-rule" mechanism adopted by the European colonizers widened the social distance among the communal

groups, consequently reinforcing the ethnocentric factor in the emergence of ethnicity.

Although colonialism was a system geared towards the exploitation and oppression of the African peoples, it also created a bourgeoisie class in Africa, in the term of nationalist whose policies and activities we can also say is – partly the source of ethnic conflict in Africa today. When many African states gained independence, the nationalists that took over the mantle of leadership from the colonialists were not only “interested in replacing Europeans in leading positions of power and privileges” (NzongolaNtalaja 1989:76) they created opportunities for themselves and their cronies that enabled them to plunder the economy and make sure that existing opportunities and benefits in the state were reserved for themselves and people from their ethnic or tribal enclaves. This is how NzengolaNtalaja poignantly put this view in his *The crisis in Zaire*:

*It is the national ruling class itself that constitutes the principal obstacle to economic growth and development through the privatization of the state, depriving it of these essential means and capabilities with which to generate economic growth, improve the living conditions of the masses ... (1987a:9)*

Mobutu was an example of those nationalists who plundered the economy of their states for personal benefit. As documented in one monthly magazine:

*Since he came to power Mobutu has been alleged to hold about US \$4 billion in a numbered SWISS bank account he owns. Documentary evidence of the extent of corruption also testified to the fact that Mobutu, his family and friends own twenty-six extensive properties in Belgium and France ... (quoted from Adesina 1998:83).*

In Nigeria, the story is not completely different from that of Mobutu. Between 1960 and now, the North has used its control of the seat of power in the country to promote itself by the initiation and execution of policies and programmes that secure for them key positions in the politico-economic spheres of the country. This move is now supported by the much-disputed Federal character clause in the 1979 constitution (section 14 (3) (a)) which states that:

*The composition of the government of the federation or any of its affairs should be carried out in such manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity and also to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there*



*shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies.*

Clearly, what the principle of federal character states is simply; that Nigerian affairs should be conducted in such a way that they are not dominated by persons from a few states or ethnic groups. Although the point of the inclusion of this principle in the constitution is to reflect the multi-ethnic character of the Nigerian states, the application of this principle by the Northerners who control the political power has brought more problems than good to the Nigerian society.

To start with, the principle of federal character which has been used by the Northerners to place their kinsmen in strategic positions is faulty in the sense that unlike the principle of affirmative action in the United States which was meant to compensate certain groups of people because of the wrong done them in the past is not completely applicable to the Nigerian scene. The reason, being that the Northerners cannot be said to have been wronged or have been denied opportunities and benefits by any of the other ethnic groups in the society that now “suffer”. Therefore, we can say in the words of Bodunrin that the Northerners:

*cannot be described as victims of past discriminatory government or social policies by any group. Here, there ‘is no guilty group which is morally bound to make reparation for past misdeeds (Bodunrin 1989: 304).*

The Northerners are not alone in this power “show”. Leaders in other major ethnic groups who held key positions in the society have also been found wanting in this regard. According to the Western Nigeria white paper of 1964, an easterner (Dr Ikejiani) who was the Chairman of the Nigeria Railway Corporation was responsible for the fact that of the 431 senior posts, 270 were manned by Ibo. Similarly, of the 104 staff in the Nigerian Ports Authority, 73 were Ibo. (Bamisaye. 1976:90). The case is also the same for Chief Obafemi Awolowo, who by virtue of his closeness to General Yakubu Gowon, Nigerian Head of State (1967-1970), and as a result of the vacuum created by the Ibos who were displaced by the civil war (1967-1970), further advanced the educational, economic, industrial and bureaucratic interests of the Yoruba people (Adesina I 998:89, Nnoli 1981:129-30).

However, as these leaders created opportunities and benefits for themselves and members of their ethnic groups, others who were not so placed or were not represented in the scheme of things, would inevitably feel alienated from the state; the result of which is the complete lack of confidence

in the state. And as the state becomes derelict in its responsibility to its citizens, that is being unable to cater for the common good of its citizens, they gradually begin to withdraw into their tribal or ethnic enclaves for social fulfilments. This withdrawal is enhanced because of the great value traditional Africans attach to their communal way of life. When individuals recoil into their ethnic enclaves like this, we can then say that the “moral’ bond that tied the citizens to the state, the real basis upon which the state could justify its power over the citizen, has slacked, if not totally cut (Uroh 1998: 1 01). What happens in this circumstance is that the state is “no longer at ease”, things really ‘fall apart’: that is, a kind of social dislocation.

In this situation of people not being able to realize their wishes and aspirations within their state, what we find is a case of frustration which eventually degenerate into a situation of complete disregard for anything called state authority. Consequently, the state becomes an arena of ethnic conflict; where social relationships can no longer generate “important common goals, interests and values in terms of which a sense of good neighbourliness can be developed among them and national identity forged (Oladipo 1998:115).

Now, if our foregoing discussion of the social predicament of the African state is anything to go by, it is obvious that what we are in today’s African is uncertainty and despair.

It should be obvious; however, from the above discussion that central to the realization of the needs and interests of the diverse ethnic groups is the need to ensure a healthy harmonization of the differences of all ethnic groups in African societies by allowing even representations in decision making bodies. This is what Wiredu calls formal representation (1995:58). But this, in itself, can also generate disaffection among the groups as it is likely for one group to “place anyone group of persons consistently in the position of minority whose right to representation is periodically violated” (Oladipo 1998: 116). In other words, representation in decision-making bodies cannot guarantee a healthy relationship without ensuring the representation of the will of the representative in decision making. To achieve this requires a new social order for Africa. The point of this new order would be to ensure that the pursuit of individual or group interests through the oppression and exploitation of others is discouraged. To realize this, we need a kind of consensual democracy (to use Wiredu’s term) where opinions of all the ethnic groups in the state can be harmonized. We may not- be able to arrive at this form of consensus without the existence of a democratic atmosphere that will ensure the full representation of all ethnic groups. Here, we are not referring to the Western type of democracy where the game of numbers is highly prized. This is so because the Western conception of democracy which

emphasizes majority rule constantly puts “some groups periodically to be in substantively under-represented minorities.” (Wiredu 1995:58). Thus, rather than promoting cooperation among ethnic groups, this form of democratic arrangement generates conflicts and disaffection among the groups.

In what follows, we suggest after Wiredu, that the Western model of democratic arrangement can be undermined because it is inadequate for Africans’ democratic aspirations. This inadequacy is as a result of the fact that the Western democratic tradition does not square properly with Africa’s “specific historical institutional terms of democratic practice” (Ake 1992:6). Is there anything wrong, for instance, with our devising creatively new institutional forms and practices relevant to African political experiences yet imbibing the values and principles of democracy? For example, it is possible for us to “accept the necessity of pluralism without necessarily adopting the criteria for differentiating between the pluralities (ibid.). The idea here is to say that we can conceptualize political formation that can be based on tribal or ethnic groups, communities or nationality rather than on political parties. This is because the reason that political parties can be said to be in the interest of national solidarity, political security and progressive consciousness flies in the face of the fact that African societies are notable for their primary group loyalty and multinationality (ibid.). The problem one can imagine from this is that of whether such social formations are not the sources of social cleavages or group solidarity and potential conflict, especially as it can be exploited by political elites for their self-centred goals. We do not undermine the possibility of this problem. Yet, to ignore such important social pluralism is problematic for Africa’s socio-political development, because it cannot be mediated, if we do not see them as vehicles of political expression. For, to overlook it may elicit some form of “anemic interest articulation, communal violence and centrifugal tendencies ...” as we find in many African states today. Hence, we believe that any viable democratic arrangement for Africa must reflect the socio-cultural and historical realities of African societies. What we require therefore as Wiredu suggests is a democratic framework that is based on consensus, as it is practiced in many traditional African setting, for instance, the Ashanti of Ghana. There are two main advantages of this term of political system that is based on consensus. First, because the democratic arrangement will be such that it will accommodate all the opinions of all ethnic groups, it means that it will have to be representative of all such opinions. Secondly, since all ethnic groups will be duly represented, decisions that will be arrived at will, through “dialogic confrontation” to use Bakhtin’s phrase, be based on consensus. The point therefore of the adoption of this framework is to ensure that in “working out solutions in a situation of conflict of opinion or

disagreement, account should be taken of a” the interests involved” (Wiredu 1995:54).

As we have said earlier, basing decision-making in plural societies on majority opinions places some people permanently out of the scheme of things. This invariably leads to the imposition of the majority views on the minority ethnic groups; the result of which is the denial of basic needs, opportunities and benefits. This majoritarian kind of decision-making is what is responsible for the well-known incidences of adversarial politics in Africa. The Niger delta crisis in Nigeria is a case in point. The minority ethnic groups in the Niger delta where over eighty-five percent of the oil wealth of Nigeria is generated today suffer from socio-economic and ecological problems because those who control the political power have not only neglected the “hen that lays the golden egg”, they are people from certain ethnic groups who are simply interested in exploiting the offices of the Nigerian state rather than its transformation. This, as one can see presently in Nigeria, generates a kind of alienation that destroys the foundation of any social cohesion.

The point therefore of the management of ethnic conflict through consensus is to eliminate the problem inherent in the practice of keeping some people or groups permanently out of schemes designed to resolve conflicts in which they are involved. Put differently, any state that adopts this principle of consensual democracy in the resolution of ethnic conflict stands to benefit because that would ensure that all the “voices” of the diverse groups would be heard, and through conversation (not confrontation) to use Rortian phrase, they will come to a unanimous decision. Here, “unanimity and all the rigorous processes and compromises that lead to it are all efforts made to contain the wishes ...” (Nwala 1981: 168) of the majority and the minority ethnic groups in the state. In fact, it is a design to arrive at the “general will of the people in conflict” (*ibid.*). In other words, consensus becomes desirable not as a means through which the majority imposes its will on others but as the “process of regulating normal life among brothers” (*Loc. cit.*).

Now, since our consensual model of democracy presupposes a situation where claims and counterclaims can be heard, consequently resolving conflicting claims in a nonviolent manner, it means that such a democratic arrangement is characterized by undistorted communication among the participants as well as tolerance of each other’s views (Irele 1998:43). It also means that the participants in this arrangement deliberate on issues under a condition of equal advantage. The fact that representatives of ethnic groups are equal, at least in terms of their status in the course of their discussions, provides an opportunity for a fair deliberation. The outcome of this deliberation is likely to be acceptable to all parties involved. If the contrary,

then decisions can be reached by voting by all representatives. The idea of voting here should not be confused, as Wiredu says with the decision making principle of the supreme right of the majority. This is because in Wiredu's words:

*Consensus as a decision procedure, requires, in principle, that each representative should be persuaded, if not of the optimality of each decision, at least of its practice necessity, all things considered (1998:62).*

This is to say that the parties whose views do not prevail have been made to see reason with those whose views are accepted. In other words, "they prevail upon them to accept the decision arrived at, not just to live with it."(Ibid.). This is not a case of the oppression of the weak group by the strong as such; rather, what we have is a case of one group convincing the other to see the practical necessity of their point.

We need to add at this point that decisions reached through rational conversation of this sort would enjoy the support of all ethnic groups. This is so because the whole process requires that all representatives operate under a condition of equal advantage and the toleration of all shades of opinion in decision-making.

The attempt this far has been that of how, in spite of the differences of ethnic groups and their attendant conflicts, we can effectively control or resolve our ethnic differences. In doing this, we have deliberately avoided the question of whether the ethnic crises in the African states are products of the socio-cultural configuration of the African society or those of the state's inability to fulfil its obligation to her citizens. This is because ethnic conflict is a human phenomenon and as social beings that must of necessity interact with one another, we must seek viable ways of transcending our differences and live like brothers. This is what we have attempted in this essay.

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## Ethnic Conflicts and the Problem of Resolution in Contemporary Africa: A Case for African Options and Alternatives

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### Abstract

*In the last few decades most African nation-states have been going through difficult times of ethnic conflicts, violence and antagonism. These conflicts have been unable to be resolved through the long adopted western models and paradigms of conflict management. This paper is therefore designed as a response and contribution towards the ongoing debates and search for new ways to conflict management in Africa. The discussion focused on the examination of the contexts and dynamics of ethnic conflicts in Africa. Precisely, some of the forms, causes, and the underlying consequences of such with reference to some recent scenario in the continent was discussed. One of the major issues pointed out in this is in how imperialism and colonialism impacted on ethnicity and ethnic conflicts which are traceable to the colonial masters systems of administration, arbitrary delimitation and partitioning the continent. This paper also borders on how persistent these conflicts have been and how the various western models and paradigms of conflict management have failed on the order of peace deliberations due to their inadequacy to fit in properly into the Africa context. In conclusion, African traditional alternatives to conflict resolution were suggested for adoption in the next millennium.*

### Introduction

In the past few decades nearly half of a century, African societies and the emergent nation states have been undergoing difficult times in terms of ethnic conflicts and antagonisms. This situation does not lay a false claim that there had not been ethnic conflicts before the estimated time. The history and oral tradition of most African societies contain elements of conflicts and ethnic conflicts, and intra ethnic conflict situations.

The problem at present in the contemporary African societies is the rage and magnitude of these ethnic problems. Ethnic conflicts have taken different shapes and dimensions which vary from what usually were before the colonialism. Most African scholars have argued that in as much as there have been ethnic conflicts in Africa before the advent of colonial masters, the problem was indeed exacerbated and effected by the colonial administrative machinery in their colonies. Investigation into forms and causes of these conflicts in the contemporary Africa are of significance if there would be a proper management of the situation. What is being suggested now is not total eradication of the problem which seems impossible; rather a better option to be adopted remains the answer to the problem. This becomes the case because the existing ways and means of handling the ethnic conflicts in Africa have not yielded much sustaining results. Against this background, it is evident that there has been persistence of ethnic conflicts culminating to destruction of lives, properties and traditional instituted authorities and institutions in Africa.

A glossary look at the conflict situations in some African nation-states shows that over 2/3 of the emergent African nation-states have undergone or are undergoing serious ethnic conflicts. With reference to the work of Ikeazor (1996) Nigeria, Congo, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Ghana, South Africa, Rwanda, to mention but a few among others have been reduced to theatres of conflicts and ethnic struggles. These struggles may not have a decisive end if nothing urgent is done to save the ugly situation.

In light of the preceding positions, this paper examines the forms, causes, consequences and the management or resolution strategies of ethnic conflicts in contemporary African societies. Which will purposively highlight on the inadequacies of the management strategies in place and the suggestion of African alternatives in such situations.

### **Forms and nature of ethnic conflicts in contemporary Africa**

There are varieties of ethnic conflicts in the present African nation-states or societies. Conflicts are either jawjaw (war of words) or war war. It begins from the point of simple disagreement to a point where open violence becomes inevitable and continuous hostile environment perpetuated (Osaghae 1993). On a similar note, ethnic conflicts can be classified in a number of ways. There may be a distinction between public realm ethnicity which involves conflicts related to the determination of who gets what, when and how, and private realm ethnicity that may not invite state intervention (Osaghae 1994). In relation to the above what is most obtainable in African situation is the public realm ethnicity. This may be partly because of the

limited development of the private sector in most African societies, though ethnicity in the two realms is recursive (Rahushka and Sheplse. 1972).

Another dimension in the classification of ethnic conflicts in Africa apart from the population descriptive analysis above is the degree of manifestation. On this note, ethnic conflict may be latent or manifest. The latent forms are those that are non-violent per se. Even though they may be destructive in nature or lead to sporadic violence, they are indeed grievances and underground vexations. This may be similar to what is regarded as cold war in the international political arena. In this situation there are inherent hatred among ethnic groups and enclaves. Osaghae (1994) posits that ethnic conflicts are not always violent. More usual or “normal” conflicts are nonviolent and occur as part of normal life. In most cases, they are underground or latent and may not be obvious to the observer. We may refer to non-violent ethnic conflicts as civil, ethnic conflict which can take the form of competitive party politics, judicial redress, media protests, and in some cases peaceful demonstrations. On the opposite side of this case is the manifest or violent conflicts which represent only one extreme of a continuum. It is when channels of expression are closed or government fails to respond or responds negatively that conflicts can take violent forms (Osaghae 1994).

The forms and nature of ethnic conflicts described above are interestingly what can be categorized as interethnic conflicts. Notwithstanding the degree of manifestation, or whether people that are involved are private or public realm, the underlying factor is their bearings on inter ethnicity. This brings the focus of this paper to the issue of interethnic violence in Africa. In fact the history and picture of ethnic conflicts in Africa that has been popularized is one of ethnic groups tearing themselves apart and failing to reach agreement on fundamental matters. The inter-ethnic violence which Agyeman (1992) term “ethnic genocidal wars that continue to erupt over land and other matters of purely local nature in Zagon Kataf I Hausa conflict Tiv I jukun conflict, and Ibo I Annang conflict in Nigeria, Konkomba I Narumba conflict and Nawauri I Gongga conflict in Ghana and Topose and Dongiro (Southern Sudanese groups) Kokuro Mayatta conflict in Kenya have been cited as classical cases of ethnic violence. On the other hand, civil wars in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Chad, Angola, Rwanda, Sudan and Mozambique indicate the ethnic scourge perspectives (Osaghae, 1994).

There are also instances of intraethnic violence in Africa, such among the Modakeke life in Nigeria to mention but one example. It is noteworthy that intra ethnic conflicts were ever they occur may be violent but not exactly comparable to what obtains in the interethnic conflicts. One of the reasons

behind this may be presence of ethnic consciousness and binding factors which are almost nonexistence outside a particular ethnic enclave.

Ethnic conflicts can also be classified or categorized on the basis of their pervasiveness or regularity and intensity. In this regard, among African nation-states the degree, intensity and frequency of occurrence of ethnic conflict vary. For instance, the problem of ethnicity and the antecedent problems are more evident in Nigeria, Cameroon, Uganda and Sudan than it is in Benin, Zimbabwe and Tanzania (Osaghae 1994). Lately, ethnic conflicts are on the increase in Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Mozambique, Zaire (Congo Democratic Republic) and Burundi. Having discussed the forms and nature of ethnic conflicts in Africa, it is important also to examine the underlying factors or causes of these conflict situations.

### **Causes and the underlying factors of ethnic conflicts en Africa**

As the problem of ethnic conflict in Africa is real and wide spread, there is a need to examine from an anthropological cum historical perspective what might have been responsible for the occurrence of these conflicts. Ethnic conflicts may be a product a several factors among which are the structural ethnic consciousness, colonial factors and unhealthy competitions. Among these factors, colonialism is pointed as the cardinal and the pivotal context which gave rise to other issues that precipitated ethnic rivalries and conflict situations in Africa.

Consciousness of one's ethnic origin or background is a psycho sociological reality that is largely universal in nature. Ethnic consciousness may be described as that subconscious or conscious identification with one's ethnic background. Such identification may sometimes be unobtrusive, subtle, and largely unnoticed by others. On the other hand, it may be obtrusive and crudely insensitive. Ethnic consciousness amongst people can be found in many multicultural societies in varying degrees, in conflict or coexistence with other forms of consciousness such as class, religious or national consciousness (Ikeazor 1996). From this point of view, high degree of ethnic consciousness or unguarded ethnic consciousness can result to ethnic tension and conflict where two opposing view converge. There are more of ideological framework towards ethnic rivalry and conflict situation. Depending on the direction of consciousness, national consciousness may be a strong factor towards nation building. On the negative aspect which we are more concerned about, ethnic consciousness may entirely be divisive, and of parochial form. These undesirable forms of consciousness have, particularly in their unfettered forms, plunged many nations into quagmires of bloodletting strife and

instability. Ethnic consciousness also known as tribalism in some forms in Nigeria in its extreme level reduced Uganda from one of Africa's most promising countries to one of the poorest. It is the same form of consciousness among some South African blacks that is putting their country's post-apartheid future in jeopardy. In 1994 about five hundred thousand Rwandans women, children, men, old and young died, butchered by their countrymen consumed by the bitterest ethnic prejudice (Ikeazor 1996). The ingredients of ethnic consciousness have been negatively harnessed by the African emergent unpatriotic leaders who usually bank on ethnic sentiments and arguments for their selfish ends.

Ethnic consciousness provides the African leaders with platforms for their ideological and morally deficient political positions. The ruling class in order to sustain their positions confuses their various peoples with conflict generating these theories and explanations in the face of social and political questions facing them. Ethnic conflicts in some cases have been generated as a result of this singular factor. In Nigeria for instance, the episode in the fifties during the first republic at the Western House of Assembly, which denied the easterner non-Yomba member from becoming the first premier of Western region culminated to an enduring ethnic conflict among the two major conflict groups involved and the consequent ethnic group that had the fattest blow? Although, as earlier on mentioned these conflicts are not necessarily violent, rather they are latent and underground in nature.

Apart from the ethnic consciousness which is more of an ideological framework or background to ethnic conflicts in Africa, there is the issue of colonialism; and westernization contexts and situations that gave rise and even promoted ethnic rivalry and conflict in Africa. These include the political structure, economic and social transformation of the traditional societies to nation-states. They are mostly the artificial creation of the colonial masters in their bid to capture Africa's sense of unity.

In the first place, colonial administration in Nigeria created interlocking conflicts situation through their pattern of administration. For Osaghae (1994) conflicts in Africa are both inevitable and expected. This is not because Africa is the bed rock of conflicts, but because Africa's recent history is peculiar. From the pre-colonial period through the colonial and post-colonial periods, Africa has been the centre of all kinds of conflicts. These conflicts have had to do, not simply with interests that are fleeting or permanent, or more entrenched than those anywhere else, but interests that have had the ring of continuity in the midst of changes across the ages and across the periods of African history. What have today is a manifestation of a historical evolution that has made conflicts, inevitable and crisis the major feature of African

situation. If we periscope the facts from the present, it would probably be true to say that what we are witnessing in Africa today, whether in Liberia or Somalia, in Rwanda or South Africa or even in Nigeria, is actually manifestation of the enormous contradictions that exist on the African continent". African states are artificial creation and to a large extent opposite to the organismic theory of state creation. The Various organized and functioning nations were brought together differently, diversified as they were before the colonial experience by the grace of colonial forces which destroyed the traditional African political systems. Ordinarily, when people with different historical experiences, diverse cultures, varying economic conditions and political systems are brought together, conflict is inevitable among them. This case is evident in almost all African nation-states.

Secondly, the colonial creation did not just end with the act of state creation and imposition of values on the existing societies. The colonial masters went ahead to manipulate, playing group against group in order to maintain conflict over the African peoples. It could be true to say that some of the manifested conflicts that we have in Africa today actually date back to the beginning or the colonial divide and rule policies. In various nations in Nigeria for instance the Lord Lugard's colonial administration created and made use of docile rulers where they were in existence and the warrant chiefs where there are no substantive central political system such as among the Ibo's or the South Eastern Nigeria.

From the Historical evidence, the colonial masters to a great extent contributed immensely to what we experience as incessant ethnic conflicts in most parts of Northern Nigeria. There, during colonialism the Hausa / Fulani Emirs were imposed on the non-Hausa Fulani ethnic nations. The leaders of these non-Hausa / Fulani groups were made to suffer tremendously for any act of non-conformity to the artificially instituted authorities. It is the nostalgia of these incidences that provided the easy ground for the Zangokataf / Hausa conflict in 1992. Similarly the use of ethnicism by the British colonial authorities in their divide and rule methods left a number of undesirable legacies for the newly independent Nigeria in 1960.

Today, not many Nigeria will be aware that the colonial authorities introduced segregated quarters known as Sabon Gari and Tudan Wada in several Northern. Nigeria cities for "stranger" coming to settle from the south and other parts of Nigeria and the indigenes respectively (Ikeazor 1996). The segregated quarter's policy was one of many divisive plots hatched by the colonial authorities who preferred not to foster close communal relations between the various communities and ethnic groups of their Nigerian colony. Nnoli (1989) dealt with this question extensively with particular reference to



one interethnic riot instigated in the Northern Nigeria by the colonial officials in Jos Plateau.

Another fundamental or root issue in ethnic conflict in Africa is the multi-ethnic factor. Like ethnic consciousness, multi ethnicity is a natural context within which most African nation-states found themselves. Although, the two related conditions have been grossly exploited and abused by the colonial masters and the African nationalist leaders for their threatening actions regarding the various communities which sustain peoples' lives than by any intrinsic hostility among African peoples. In Nigeria, Sudan and Liberia for instance, the ethnicization of state power led to civil war (Osaghae 1994).

In recent time, the question of ethnic minority right, have been bothering most African states. This issue in many states has led to violent conflicts at the extreme case. Practically in African states, with very few exceptions, the minorities are usually marginalized and oppressed which is a constant source of their opposition to dominant group. The minority nationalism may be in form of resistance against the imposition of a dominant language as a lingua franca or quest for equitable distribution of resources which are derived from their own territory as it is the case in Nigeria. Minority ethnic groups usually from the southern part of Nigeria have in recent time in the democratic transition asserted their right to the presidency. Their grievances have been that they are marginalized irrespective of the fact that they produce the of the country's oil wealth.

From the fore going position it is deducible that ethnic conflict is usually instigated by bath remote or what can be referred to as root factors and the immediate contexts. Usually any pronounced conflict situation would have taken a course or more of the kinds already discussed.

### **Consequences of ethnic conflicts in Africa**

Whatever be the underlying factors or the precipitating contexts of ethnic conflicts in Africa nation-states, there are bound to be consequences which are usually negative and retrogressive to the country's survival.

One of the prominent outcomes of ethnic struggle and conflict in African has been civil war or violence. Many countries in Africa have been dragged into the theatre of wars in this case. For instance, in 1967, Africa most populous nation Nigeria after a year's orgy of ethnic conflict and violence descended into a full scale civil war. At the end of the Nigeria civil war 1970, over a million lay dead, bombed, shot or starved to death. The Congolese civil war which broke out shortly before Nigeria had reduced the country to shamble and left it with one of the vilest dictatorships the continent had

known by the time it was over. Evidences of civil wars and bloody genocide are still in countries like Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Burundi to mention but a few. In Rwanda, half a million to a million people were slaughtered in a matter of months in middle of 1994. "Their crime was that they come from the wrong ethnic group" (Ikeazor, 1996). This made Ikeazor to conclude that the underlying theme in most of the conflicts in Africa is ethnic division or ethnicity. Within the context of civil wars which is the most pronounced outcome of ethnic conflicts, other factors or contexts have specifically been linked to ethnic conflicts. These include economic, political and social predicaments.

Economically, civil wars resulting from ethnic tensions and conflicts usually plunge nations and countries into economic mess. Ordinarily during civil wars and violence, properties are destroyed which are highly valued. Houses are burnt, and some economic resources vandalized. Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and other countries that witnessed civil strife will attest to this fact. Various economic operations usually get to a halt, for instance, during the Liberia civil war, their economic produces stopped. Ethnic violence in Nigeria currently in the Niger Delta area has partially paralyzed economic exploration of crude oil in that zone. The ethnic tension between the ijaws, the Itshekiris, and the Urhobos has seriously affected the business of oil companies located in that area. In the process of the economic set back usually experienced. The intraethnic strife in Ogoni land resulted to the loss of life of notable contributor in African literature Ken Saro Wiwa. The Liberian conflict led to far reaching death consequences on the people. West Africa (1993) showed bones and remains of killed civilian plantation workers in Liberia. The conflict also had other consequences on soldiers, children and civilians. Other social consequences of ethnic conflict include lack of trust and prejudice among citizenry. These are few among the various consequences of ethnic conflict situations in Africa.

### **Ethnic conflict intervention strategies in Africa**

Due to the consequences of ethnic conflicts it has become an issue of serious attention among African nation-states particularly on how best to resolve the conflicts. Presently, African nation-states have devised various means of attending to ethnic conflicts in their various domains. The issue still remains that these means do not resolve conflicts rather they assist in managing the situation. Hence, it is important to examine some of the conflict management strategies adopted in African states. These include the

constitutional means, creation of local autonomy, inter-ethnic linkage, economic deregulation and welfare programmes in Nigeria case study.

Inter-ethnic linkage have been adopted in order to foster better relationships among people from different ethnic groups. In Nigeria for instance several policies have been initiated since independence in 1960. The unity schools were established to cater for students from all parts of the federation. In 1973, the General Gowon regime also introduced the National Youth Service Corps Programme. Similar programmes were introduced in Kenya and Zimbabwe among other African countries.

In view of the incessant ethnic tension and fear of domination, the federal government of Nigeria devised a means of coping with the situation through creation of local government areas with degrees of autonomy conferred on them. Local autonomy thus induces a sense of self government and reduces fear of domination. This is in the same direction of Barongo (1989) in advocating decentralization as a strategy of ethnic conflict management. Most Africa countries have introduced one form of decentralization to local government or the other but the problem Osaghae (1994) indicated is the unwillingness of the central government to let local localities become independent. Although the degree of autonomy is an integral part of the constitutional provisions of the country, yet there are constitutional provisions which tend to deal with the management of ethnic conflicts as the case may be in African countries since their constitutional development.

The constitutional provisions include, the fundamental human rights which are to a great extent universal. As part of the management strategies, it is believed that the guarantee of human rights is a prerequisite for ethnic management, although, the practice has shown that the guarantee is not sufficient (Osaghae 1994). For instance as Osaghae pointed out, the notion of group rights struggle featured prominently in the transition to the third republic in Nigeria especially on the part of minorities groups who argued that it is the only way by which their marginalization can be overcome. Other issues that are part of the constitutional provision include, the federal character principle, the zoning or rotational formula for sharing of political and economic power. In view of this, constitutional sociologists argued that a constitution is a deliberate solution to problems elicited by the society (Livingstone 1952; 1956). Contrary to this position, Siabbert and Welsh, (1979) posited that constitutions are not sufficient conditions for regulation of conflict. They have to be complemented and underpinned by a surge of other formal and informal devices and institutions that focus directly on the conflict. Invariably, the existing conflict resolution mechanism are westernized and unindigenous. At the extreme, arm conflicts and violence are managed

through arms. The instance of Liberia, and other African countries come to mind. In these countries, the various ethnic conflicts situations have been suppressed by arm strategies. But the problem is that these strategies are temporary and not enduring enough to resolve the existing conflicts situations in African countries. Hence, ethnic conflicts keep on persisting with unforeseeable end. The question then is what are the various conflict resolution strategies existing in African societies which have been jettisoned for the formal western alternatives since colonialism?

The informal systems of ethnic conflict resolution are indeed what should be the major focus on the African nation-states in resolving ethnic differences. These informal systems in African context may involve mobilization of local efforts which is believed to be an effective and right approach to ethnic conflict situations, Edevbie (1999). The council of elders and joint community delegations which is part of African culture is simply adequate in our present dispensation and predicament. These means are not really constitutional, that is written down in the country's constitution, nevertheless, they may be practically effective. Non constitutional solutions as Diouf (1990) argued are usually pragmatic, expedient solutions which by their nature may be difficult to institutionalize.

## **Conclusion**

In the present dispensation of ethnic conflicts in African nation-states, the western, formal system of conflict management has not really saved the situation. At the instances where they have been applied, they have only acted as management rather than means of resolving the conflicts. The search for an enduring resolution mechanism is still relevant. Although through the existing literatures and observation, there are traditional, informal systems that have not yet been utilized in the present scenario. There is then an urgent need to revitalize those existing systems for a more functional and responsive society. It is therefore believed that scholars in African issues and Africanists should concentrate on finding solutions to African ethnic crisis within (culture) rather than embracing the western paradigms that are practically non-functional to the African situation. This conference is therefore left with the deliberations on these strategies in developing consultation with the indigenous institutions.

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## Construction and Deconstruction: Anglophones or Autochtones?

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### Abstract

*While the politics of belonging has a strong tradition in the post-colonial state in Cameroon, the current wave of democratisation in the 1990s has compelled the Biya regime to re-conceptualise “belonging”. Finding it hard to win free and fair elections in the new multiparty system, the Biya government has tried to perpetuate itself in power by encouraging the resurgence of local identities which were likely to support the regime, notwithstanding the fact that this strategy obviously undermined its professed policy of national integration. It has also stretched the conventional idea of minorities to such ambiguous proportions that historical minorities like the Anglophones have seen themselves denied the status of minority in the 1996 constitution, while every small ethnic grouping which appears to distance itself from the opposition has met with government support. This paper examines the systematic efforts of the government to deconstruct the Anglophone identity - an identity which has its historical foundation in the British colonisation of the ex-Southern Cameroons and has been reactivated during the current democratisation process, posing serious problems to the Francophone-dominated state. One major government strategy has been to fuel the existing tensions between South Westerners and North Westerners in the Anglophone territory, tensions largely based in large-scale north-western settlement in the coastal plantation area and in the perceived domination of the South West by the North West economically and politically since the end of the 1950s, and to stimulate new alignments like SAWA. The paper argues that the national government has been quite successful in this endeavour, evidenced by the decline or inertia of initially powerful political opposition movements based on Anglophone alliances.*



## Anglophones and the Politics of Belonging

When in May 1990 the Anglophones dared to challenge and embarrass the one-party state by launching the Social Democratic Front (SDF) in Bamenda, they were, perhaps without knowing, providing the Biya regime with a more compelling reason than ever not only to consider Anglophones as “*les ennemis dans la maison*”, but also and more importantly to intensify strategies for neutralising Anglophone identity. The fact that the SDF rapidly rose to prominence and credibility as an opposition party in Anglophone Cameroon, coupled with the fact that its slogans and the charisma of its leader John Fru Ndi commanded nation-wide appeal, heightened the panic in government circles and hardened attitudes towards Anglophones and Anglophone identity. At first the government did not quite know how to react or whom to scapegoat. A study of pro-establishment anonymous tracts, pamphlets and declarations in the media between 1990 and 1992 shows that initial government attempts to contain the spread of the SDF and opposition politics in general, were not well thought out.

While the first government strategy was to lump all Anglophones together, and to play up the idea of Anglophone ingratitude to all, the state had done for them and their region, subsequent reactions sought to apply a divide-and-rule strategy by making a distinction between the supposedly conciliatory coastals of the South West Province and the unpatriotic, ungrateful, power-monger grassfielders of the North West Province whom the state identified with their equally troublesome cultural kin - the Bamileke of the Francophone Western Province. Thus the official rhetoric shifted from the collective condemnation of “*les Anglo-Bami*” to simply condemning “*les Bamendo-Bami*”. Subsequent developments would show that the government found it increasingly rewarding and politically expedient to tempt the South West elite away from Anglophone solidarity with strategic appointments and the idea that their real enemy was the North West elite and not the state or the central administration. Infiltrating and hijacking the South West Elite Association (SWELA), then subsequently encouraging a merger with the elite association of the native Douala to form the Grand SAWA movement, was part of government’s strategy to weaken Anglophone solidarity through divide and rule championed by elite associations (Nyamnjoh and Rowlands 1998) and the politics of the belly (Bayart 1993).

All of this contributed to the promulgation of the January 1996 constitution<sup>37</sup>, which promised protection for minorities at the same time that

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<sup>37</sup>For a discussion of the various factors contributing to the promulgation of the 1996 constitution, see Melone et al. 1996.

the state was clamping down on the activities of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), mouthpiece of the critical wing of the Anglophone minority. Such double standards would leave few in doubt as to why the new constitution was deliberately vague on the notion of “minority”, or the fact that the notion has since been manipulated to discourage solidarity on the basis of shared interests and predicaments. In his analysis of similar constitutions elsewhere in colonial and contemporary Africa, Mamdani (1996) has noted that such constitutions limit the population not to a civic but to an ethnic space. They also define identity for the populations concerned not by where individuals are born or live, but by their ethnic ancestral area. Such constitutions thus oblige everyone to follow the customs of their ethnic group and to emphasise culture, not rights. Also, by recognising “social identity exclusively through the line of the father”, states with such constitutions, ensure that no degree of inter-marriage or integration could ever put together ethnic groups that the state is determined to have asunder (Mamdani. 1998). The Cameroonian state insists on patriarchal identification by ethnic area, district and province of origin in national identity cards, birth, marriage and other civic certificates. Its constitution, like the others, enables ethnic areas to make the distinction between what Mamdani has termed “ethnic citizens and ethnic strangers”. A point with which Mono Ndjana, one of the most faithful ideologues of the ruling Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPOM), agrees when he defines “l’autochtone” as “un citoyen ethnique de l’ethnie locale” and “l’allogene” as “un citoyen ethnique de l’ethnie d’ailleurs”, stressing that in every African country “chacun est a la fois autochtone et allogene, selon sa position dans l’espace” (Mono Ndjana 1997b: 102-103).

The 18 January 1996 constitution (preamble and article 57, paragraph 3) states unequivocally that:

*The State shall ensure the protection of minorities and shall preserve the rights of indigenous populations in accordance with the law.*

*The Regional Council shall be headed by an indigene of the Region elected from among its members for the life of the Council.... The Regional Bureau shall reflect the sociological components of the Region.*

Its timing and release were hardly an accident. The ruling Beti being a minority ethnic group under threat of losing power in a genuine democracy, the Anglophones and Bamileke having proved themselves the most threatening opposition in the first five years of multipartyism, and the regime having rejected a “one man one vote” democracy (Mono Ndjana 1997b: 102-103) through repeated riggings, the 1996 constitution was a foregone

conclusion. It would serve the government perfectly in neutralising both the Anglophone and Bamileke opposition, while at the same time diverting attention from failed economic and social policies by scapegoating grassfielders as ruthless land grabbing, tax-evading settlers, who were making it impossible for government to deliver. Its promulgation preceded the municipal elections that the opposition SDF party won in some key urban constituencies, including Douala. The fact that it immediately occasioned government-condoned demonstrations by the native Douala, the SAWA, was even more telling. The protests led to the creation of the SAWA<sup>38</sup> movement of the coastal peoples, presenting themselves as an “autochthonous” minority that had suffered political and economic marginalization from dominant and hegemonic “settlers” or “allogenes” from the Grassfields (Tatah Mentan 1996; Wang Sonne 1997; Zognong 1997; Jua 1997; Yenshu 1998; Nyamnjoh and Rowlands 1998); yet also playing into the hands of political opportunists keen to stretch their movement to include groupings as remote from the coast as the Bayang of Manyu Division. Their aim was to fight exploitation by “unscrupulous” and “ungrateful” grassfields settlers, and to play up the idea that as minorities, they needed peace, protection, social order and development. The SAWA demonstrated against the Bamileke in particular, who alone accounted for 70 per cent of the Douala population, and who had provided for only one indigenous mayor out of the five councils in which the SDF had won the municipal elections. This was seen as evidence that the Bamileke were ready to use their numbers to exclude the indigenous minorities in a multiparty context (Wang Sonne 1997)<sup>39</sup>.

In the South West Province, the pro-CPOM governor Oben Peter Ashu blamed the settler population, which outnumbered the indigenes in most urban areas of the province, for the poor performance of the CPOM in some key municipalities, and intensified his crackdown on the SCNC and any event organised to celebrate Anglophone identity by scholars and activists. A

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<sup>38</sup>“The term Sawa “is generally employed by the Douala to refer to themselves as coastal peoples. It has also been extended to embrace related peoples such as the Bakweri, the Pongo, Malimba, Dibombari, the Bodiman, the Ewudi (all closely related to the former). Other distant peoples in the Littoral Province and the South West Province (e.g. the Mbo of the Mungo Division, the Bakossi, the Bassa of Douala city, the Yabassi, the Bakundu, Balondo, Balong, Mbonge and Bafaw) have also come to identify themselves with this appellation” (Yenshu ‘1998).

<sup>39</sup>It should be noted that anti-Bamileke sentiments have a long history in the Cameroonian post-colonial state. Such anti-Bamileke feelings were even expressed within the Catholic Church. For example, in 1987, Douala priests strongly protested against the appointment of a Bamileke auxiliary bishop in the Douala Archdiocese. See Collectif Changer le Cameroun (C3) 1992. The political liberalisation in the early 1990s and the 1996 constitution only helped to exacerbate these sentiments.

scheduled launching of Francis Nyamnjoh's *The Cameroon GCE Crisis: A Test of Anglophone Solidarity* was banned at the last minute, and the author, Asong Wara (organiser) and Christian Cardinal Tumi (chief launcher) threatened with detention, 15 days renewable, should they proceed despite the ban. Subsequent bannings were brought to bear on the launching of Charles Taku's *For Dame Lynda Chalker & Other Anglophone Cameroonians Notes*, and of Christopher Nsalai's *Look Up to the Mountain Top: Beyond Party Politics*. Grassfielders in the South West Province were likened to scabies, a stubborn skin affliction commonly referred to in Pidgin-English as "Cam-no-go" [meaning an illness that wouldn't cure or a visitor that wouldn't leave]. In Kumba for example, Chief Mukete organised thugs of Bafaw youths to defend the regime against the "settler vote" in an election the SDF opposition was set to win. His action would be hailed subsequently by Nerus Nemaso Mbile, an old and experienced politician, at a joint conference of South West chiefs and elites in July 1999, and other traditional leaders urged to emulate him<sup>40</sup>.

Although its preamble still pays respect to the age old ideology of nation building, the constitution appears to place more premium on ethnic identities and to allow for an interpretation by government that promises reward to all elite ready to sacrifice the quest for national citizenship or power in favour of ethnic citizenship and power. Indeed, from the way politics has been practised since the promulgation of the constitution, it would appear that civic identity and inter-ethnic or national constituency, are limited to the CPOM president, the only person with a meaningful right to seek power at a central or national level. Challengers, who are not discouraged by an unfavourable electoral code (Tolen 1997) and the invidious manipulation of electoral rolls, are eventually vanquished by a post-election rigging machinery perfected over the years since 1992. This in part explains how from a modest score of 39.976 % in the first multiparty presidential elections in 1992, Paul Biya would in the 1997 election score 92.57%, reminding one strongly of the one-party era when elections were a mere formality for the incumbent and such scores as 99.99% commonplace. Also, by opting for ten regions along the lines of existing provinces, the constitution proved the Biya government's committed disregard for federalism and its determination to keep Anglophones divided (1996 Constitution, Article 61, and paragraph 3). In addition, of course, to living up to the French inspired aversion for decentralised government among Francophone Cameroonians.

Unsurprisingly, the constitution has been much criticised, especially by radical Anglophones and the Bamileke. Both the constitution and the

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<sup>40</sup>See *The Herald*, 21 July 1999, pp.1, and 3-4, for a detailed report on the conference which was held at the University of Buea on 17 July 1999.

advantage taken by the SAWA of it have been interpreted differently by various groups, using media that were either for or against (Tatah Mentan 1996). While the SAWA and the Beti, supported by Cameroon Tribune, Le Patriote and L'Anecdote, hailed it as a necessary and timely step to protect minority groups from the asphyxiating grip of expansionist and dominant migrants such as the Bamileke and groups from the Bamenda Grassfields, others, articulating their case through the critical anti-government press of mainly Bamileke and Anglophone origin, saw it as a recipe for national disintegration (Tatah Mentan 1996; Nkwi and Nyamnjoh 1997; Zognong 1997; Jua 1997). Indeed, since 1996, various groups have taken advantage of its ambiguous promise of protection for minorities to fan the flames of division and differences with others as a pretext for access to power and resources at national and regional levels (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997; Nyamnjoh and Rowlands 1998; Eyoh 1998a and b; Nyamnjoh 1999; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh forthcoming). And critical Anglophones have seen in this outcome a trivialization of the notion of "a minority", and blamed the CPOM government for championing the politics of divide and rule to the detriment of the Anglophone cause and nationhood. Some have interpreted the new constitution as a conspiracy by the state to marginalize the Anglophones even further (Tatah Mentan 1996: 186-194; Jua, 1997). A concern which John Ngu Foncha had already voiced in his letter of resignation from the CPOM in 1990, when he wrote: "The Anglophone Cameroonians whom I brought into the union have been ridiculed and referred to as "Ies Biafraï", "Ies ennemies dans la maison", "Ies frattres" etc., and the constitutional provisions which protected this Anglophone minority have been suppressed, their voice drowned ..."<sup>41</sup>

The 1996 constitution thus denies the Anglophone claim to minority status by stressing ethnic purity and indigenous cultural traditions, while downplaying the community's colonial heritage. It re-discovers the colonial practice of seeing ethnic communities as "permanent crystalline structures" (Ardener 1967: 297-299), and thus can afford to question the idea of an Anglophone identity that unites people beyond so-called tribal boundaries. The constitution has also often been used by the regime and its allies to endorse the idea of democracy as an ethnic or group right rather than as an empowerment of the individual (and the guaranteeing of his/her civic rights regardless of ethnic origin) as stipulated in its preamble. For, as Mono Ndjana the CPOM ideologue argues, every ethnic group is entitled to "sa place au soleil, sans chercher a oter les autres du meme soleil" (Mono Ndjana 1997b:

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<sup>41</sup>Dr J.N. Foncha's Letter of Resignation from the C.P.D.M reproduced in Mukong 1990: 155.

103). This view effectively denies the idea of a Cameroonian citizenship, since even metropolitan areas like Douala and Yaounde, created by colonists and cosmopolitan from the outset, have under the new constitution been claimed by this or that autochthonous group to a degree quite unprecedented. Little wonder therefore, that the appointment of Andre Wouking, a Bamileke, as Archbishop of Yaounde in July 1999 (to succeed Jean Zoa, a Beti, who died in 1998), should be greeted with indignation by Beti elite, clergy and Christians, at the same time that it was hailed by the Bamileke press as a good lesson in national integration by the Pope to President Biya, champion of the rhetoric of national integration<sup>42</sup>.

To those who sought protection as minorities, the price to pay would increasingly be stated in no uncertain terms: Vote the CPOM, the only party, according to Mono Ndjana (1997b: 96), with “une assise assez importante ou un pouvoir d’attraction suffisant”. Which is exactly what the Prime Minister; Peter Mafany Musonge, himself a SAWA, told SAWA chiefs at a meeting in Kumba on 8 March 1997. In fact, since his appointment in September 1996, Musonge and the pro-CPOM SWELA and SAWA elite have constantly admonished the coastal people to throw their weight behind President Biya and the CPOM. As Musonge put it during a reception in Buea following his appointment, “President Biya has scratched our back, and we shall certainly scratch the Head of State’s back thoroughly when time comes” meaning that the SAWA should, together with him, resolve to manifest their total support and allegiance to the President who appointed him<sup>43</sup>. A promise they were shown to have kept at the 1997 presidential elections, after which Biya would again reward him with a re-appointment as PM. The fact that political parties created by SAWA indigenes at the beginning of the 1990s had all failed to take root by 1996<sup>44</sup>, meant that SAWA opposition politicians who had failed to

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<sup>42</sup>See Cameroon Tribune, 19 July 1999, pp.8-9, for reactions to the appointment titled: “Yaounde: l’archevêque qu’on n’attendait pas”; and La Nouvelle Expression, 21 July 1999, p.6, for the article “Archdiocese de Yaounde: déjà des cloches dissonnantes”. In an interview with the Editor-in-Chief of Cameroon Tribune, Paul C. Ndembiyembe (a Beti), Andre Wouking expressed shock and indignation over the behaviour of a Beti priest who refused to say mass at the Yaounde Cathedral, on 18 July 1999, “to mark his disapproval” of the appointment of a Bamileke as archbishop of a “Beti” diocese. See Cameroon Tribune, 23 July 1999, pp.8-10.

<sup>43</sup>See Cameroon Post, 12-18 November 1996, pp.1 and 3; The Herald, 11-12 November 1996, pp.1 and 3; The Star Headlines, 20 November 1996, pp.1-7. For a critical commentary on the “politics of back scratching” which former PM Simon Achidi Achu and his successor PM Peter Mafany Musonge sought to promote in their regions• and elsewhere in appreciation of appointments by Biya, see Rolcod Gobala in Cameroon Post, 26 November - 2 December 1996, p.7.

<sup>44</sup> Examples include Yondo Black’s Mouvement Social pour la Nouvelle Démocratie (MSND), Jean-Jacques Ekindi’s Mouvement Progressiste (MP), Mola Njoh Litumbe’s Liberal



make it at a national level through party politics found in the SAWA movement a singular opportunity to stage a political comeback. In his paper on this movement, Wang Sonne (1997: 187-195) draws attention to the example of Jean-Jacques Ekindi of the Mouvement Progressiste (MP), who, after 4 years in political wilderness, enthusiastically accepted to coordinate the SAWA movement, supported by the very CPOM from which he had resigned in 1991 and the leader of which he had challenged resolutely at the October 1992 presidential elections. This perspective by no means denies the SAWA movement a cultural content or legitimacy, but it draws attention to how a political elite could seek to manipulate a cultural movement for political ends. For more on elite associations and politics in Cameroon, see Nyamnjoh and Rowlands (1998).

### **Containing Anglophone Identity in Cameroon**

The 1996 constitution and the politics of belonging in the 1990s might have institutionalised and intensified the sense of divisions among Anglophones, but this by no means implies that the Machiavellian designs of the Francophone-dominated state for asphyxiating Anglophone identity started then. Indeed, the manipulation of ethnic and regional rivalries to divide and rule the Anglophones, among others, is a long-standing strategy in national politics (Bayart 1979). As we have argued elsewhere (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997), contrary to Anglophone expectations upon re-unification federalism, far from providing for equal partnership between Anglophones and Francophones and guaranteeing cultural continuity for the former, turned out to be nothing more than a comma in a long sentence of assimilation of the Anglophone minority (see also Benjamin 1972). Gradually, the poignant sense of cultural erosion and devaluation of most things Anglophone this brought about resulted in an Anglophone consciousness with every potential for crystallising into a grand Anglophone *ethnie*. The feeling of being “marginalised”, “exploited”, and “assimilated” by the Francophone-dominated state and even by the Francophone population as a whole, has inspired novelists, playwrights, poets, musicians, journalists, academics, the clergy and the entire Anglophone community (Nyamnjoh 1996a; Lyonga et al. 1993). Most Anglophones like ‘their outspoken Archbishop Paul Verdzev of Bamenda, are acutely aware of the active pursuit by the state of “an unwritten policy of absorption and assimilation” of Anglophones. They have a deep feeling that their only chance of being accepted as bona fide Cameroonians

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Democratic Alliance (LDA) and Samuel Eboua’s Mouvement pour la Démocratie Populaire (MDP).



seems to rest with their total Frenchification or francophonisation<sup>45</sup>. A feeling which is lent added credence by arrogant declarations' now and again by Francophones in high office. In one such declaration, the former Vice-Prime Minister in-charge of Housing and Town Planning, Hamadou Mustapha, said: "A un moment donne effectivement, on a commence a oublier que les Anglophones etaient la: on a eu l'impression que les Anglophones s'etaient deja francophonises"<sup>46</sup>. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the government, in its interpretation of a constitution purportedly protective of minorities, should not provide for an Anglophone minority.

In an earlier article on the Anglophone problem (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997), we discussed at length some of the strategies employed by successive Francophone-dominated governments since independence to marginalise Anglophones and weaken or deny them a sense of identity. From the outset, Ahidjo, Cameroon's first president, was never enthusiastic about federalism as a lasting solution to the bi-cultural colonial heritage of the country. He saw federalism merely as an unavoidable transit on a journey to the total assimilation of the Anglophone minority into a strongly centralised state *à la trenceise*. To achieve this objective, he employed several tactics which included: playing Anglophone political factions off against each other and eventually uniting them into a single party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU) created in September 1966; dis-appointing from positions of responsibility key Anglophones committed to federalism in favour of those amenable to the unitary state; creating "clients" through granting top posts in the federal institutions and in the single party to representatives of significant ethnic and regional groups in the Anglophone region; and resorting to overt repression of dissent. Through these and other tactics he succeeded in abolishing the federation in favour of the unitary state, which he achieved through his "glorious revolution of 20 May 1972". To reduce further the danger of any united Anglophone action against the unitary state, Ahidjo decided to divide the erstwhile Federated State of West Cameroon into the South West and North West Provinces. This decision, masterfully informed by the internal contradictions within the Anglophone community between the coastal/forest people (the South West Province) and the grassfields people (the North West Province), would exacerbate those divisions which in future would serve as the Achilles' hill of most attempts at Anglophone solidarity.

Upon succeeding Ahidjo, Biya proved he was just as keen in obliterating Anglophone identity and in zombifying the Anglophone elite, as the former

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<sup>45</sup>See Paul Verdzekov, Archbishop of Bamenda, A Talk at the Presentation of a Book Entitled: The Cameroon GCE Crisis: A Test of Anglophone Solidarity, Monday, 1 July 1996.

<sup>46</sup>See *Jeune Afrique Economie*, No.207, 20 November 1995, p.63.

was. His government has thus employed similar strategies (perfecting some and adding new ones) in containing the Anglophones and their identity. The so-called Bamenda Proclamation, adopted by the Second All Anglophone Conference (MC<sup>2</sup>) held at Bamenda from 29 April to 1 May 1994, mentions some of the most important strategies used. It says that “rather than address the issue”, the Biya government has preferred “to feign ignorance of the Anglophone problem ... to seek by diverse manoeuvres to create division within the Anglophone nation with the aim of giving the false impression that there is no general consensus within it on constitutional reform ... and to accuse the All Anglophone Conference and its affiliated organisations unjustly and falsely of having adopted a secession of Anglophone Cameroon as their goal”.

The Biya government has often tried to trivialise the Anglophone-Francophone divide, preferring to stress a common colonial identity under Germany, and the idea of national integration which the 1972 revolution invented. Meaningful though this argument would be to any country with a clear sense of vision, it fails, in the Cameroonian context, to convince the Anglophone minority, by coming short, in practice, of institutionalising mechanisms for weakening the strong grip on the state by Francophones and their French colonial heritage. At present, Cameroon claims to be a bilingual and multi-cultural state, which is said to be a safe guarantee for the preservation of the differential linguistic and cultural heritage of the post-German colonial era. In practice, the experiences of ordinary Anglophones belie such claims, especially as little is done to disguise the superiority accorded the French language and Francophone cultural values over everything Anglophone or English.

In reply to the Anglophone demand for a return to the federal state as the best guarantee of their identity, the Biya government has often stressed that the unitary state was the result of a massive vote of the Cameroonian people voluntarily expressed during the 1972 referendum. Like Ahidjo, Biya has tabled arguments in favour of the present dispensation, and has rejected federalism as costly, weakening to state power, and divisive; even if his politics of belonging does not appear to be any less divisive or costly. Declining to discuss a possible return to federalism which he sees as a ploy by radical Anglophones to obtain secession for their area, Biya (with the support of most Francophone elite and media, regardless of political persuasion) has conceded to a certain degree of decentralisation within the unitary state, the so-called

ten-region option based on the present ten provinces in Cameroon (1996 constitution, article 61, paragraph 1)<sup>47</sup>.

Like his predecessor, Biya has attempted, with significant success, to divide the Anglophones, often capitalising on existing contradictions between the North West and South West elite. One of his divisive tactics has been to appoint South Westerners to key positions in the South West, in response to South Westerners' complaints about North West domination over their province (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997; Eyoh 1998a and b). Biya has also sought to use his Anglophone allies for the defence of the unitary state in exchange for rewards in the form of appointments, sinecures and a blind eye to corruption and/or embezzlement by those in high office. And in turn the allies have tended to blame the leaders of various Anglophone movements for their "demagogic and irresponsible" calls for federalism or secession, and to dispute their claims of being "spokesmen" of the Anglophone community, blaming them, as did Prime Minister Peter Mafany Musonge in November 1996, for leading "hostile campaigns at home and abroad to foster division and hatred" among Cameroonians<sup>48</sup>. They equally challenge claims of Anglophone marginalisation, preferring to talk instead of "self-marginalisation" and to invite Anglophones to consider themselves as fully fledged Cameroonians with the same rights and responsibilities as Francophones (Nyamnjoh and Rowlands 1998: 335). This has often led to severe confrontations between the two camps and to mutual accusations of betrayal. But to most ordinary Anglophones, it is simply hard to fathom how, just for a few appointments and sinecures, their elite are all too eager to serve as gatekeepers and scavengers for a government that denies them an identity

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<sup>47</sup>In an interview granted to *Jeune Afrique Economie* in 1999, Biya indicated his willingness to organise a referendum on the Anglophone problem "if the need is there", stressing that only a small minority of the Anglophones were clamoring for secession. For a summary of this interview, see Isaha'a Boh Cameroon \_ Bulletin No.417. Contrary to Biya's view, we showed in an earlier article (Konings and Nyamnjoh 1997) that the Anglophone problem can no longer be perceived as an elitist problem. This can be substantiated by the widespread support for a number of actions organised against the Francophone-dominated state by the various Anglophone movements. This was particularly manifest during the "sensitisation tour" organised by the SCNC throughout the Anglophone territory in July-August 1995 following the return of its delegation to the United Nations. Large crowds attended the SCNC rallies; praising the delegation for its historic mission to the United Nations and pledging their support for the SCNC's new strive for total independence of the Southern Cameroons. When security forces tried to prevent the SCNC delegation from entering Kumba in the South West Province, thousands of people chased them away, thus securing a triumphant entry of the delegation into the town. For these SCNC rallies, see "SCNC Hits Kumba: 75000 jam town green", in *The Herald*, 3-6 August 1994, p.t, and "As Elites Condemn Military Operation: SCNC plans operation storm Mamfe", in *Cameroon Post*, 14-21 August 1995.

<sup>48</sup>See *The Herald*, 2-3 December 1996, p.1.

and disrecognises their predicaments as a community (Nyamnjoh 1999). More and more the youths are quite critical of those elite who spend their active years in the service of fear and repression, just to turn around upon retirement to seek fame through “dubious” identification with the Anglophone cause.

Following the organisation of the All Anglophone Conference (MC) on 2-3 April 1993, there were attempts by certain representatives of the South West Chiefs Conference and of the South West Elite Association (SWELA), who were known to be closely allied with the regime in power, to dissociate the South West Province from deliberations and resolutions of the MC and from the Buea Declaration. There was also a meeting of a previously little-known North West Cultural and Development Association (NOCUDA) at Bamenda on 14 May 1993 to dissociate the North West Province from the MC, branding it a South West affair. This meeting seems to have been organised by North Western members of the CPDM, who again, in 1994, would actively work against the holding of AACII in Bamenda, in a bid “to kill the Anglophone dream”<sup>49</sup>.

On 23 September 1993, nine representatives of the South West Chiefs Conference undertook a mission to Yaounde to pledge their unalloyed allegiance to President Biya. They told him that “they were alarmed at the numerous demonstrations, blackmail, civil disobedience, rebellious attitudes and recurrent activities designed to destabilise the state and the government”. They strongly condemned any attempts at partitioning Cameroon on the basis of Anglophone and Francophone cultures. They asked the Head of State to transform the present ten provinces into ten autonomous regions. At the end of the meeting, they drew his attention to the fact that the South West Province had been discriminated against after reunification in the distribution of “strategic posts”<sup>50</sup>.

Following the military brutalities in the South West during the 1993 government anti-smuggling campaign, a split occurred in the South West Elite Association (SWELA) founded in 1991 to promote the socio-economic and cultural development of the South West Province and combat North West domination over the South West. The split gave birth to a pro-CPDM faction keen on maintaining close links with the Biya regime and on showing strong anti-North West sentiments. The group was composed of older and younger CPDM barons, and opposed to a return to the federal state. Like the CPDM

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<sup>49</sup>See Cameroon Post, 20-27 April 1994, pp. 2-3; Cameroon Post (Special), 29 April- 1 May 1994, pp. 1-12; Cameroon Post, 29 June - 6 July 1994, pp.6-7; The Herald, 29 April - 1 May 1994, pp.1-2; Cameroon Post, 29 June - 6 July 1994, pp.6-7; The Messenger, 2 May 1994, pp.1 and 2.

<sup>50</sup>The Herald, 3-10 November 1993, p.6.

government, it championed the ten-state option, which would retain the present separation between the South West and North West Provinces and thus safeguard South West autonomy. Another faction of SWELA, with Martin Nkemngu of Lebialem

Division as Secretary General was more critical of government policies and often allied to opposition parties, principally the SDF, an “active member” of which Martin Nkemngu declared he was<sup>51</sup>. It advocated closer co-operation between the South West and North West elite as a necessary precondition for an effective representation of Anglophone interests. It strongly supported the Anglophone demand for a return to the federal state - a stance heavily criticised by the pro-CPOM faction which saw Nkemngu and the entire Lebialem Division as grassfielders and therefore North Westerners in disguise. But to show how powerful the pro-CPOM SWELA was, it's Secretary-General, Caven Nnoko Mbele, was appointed Government Delegate for the Kumba Urban Council following the January 1996 municipal elections, while Martin Nkemngu, Secretary-General of the pro-SCNC SWELA, was transferred from Buea where he was provincial chief for CAMNEWS, to Yaounde as an ordinary staff of the official publisher, SOPECAM.

Since 1994 a number of south-western and north-western chiefs and members of the CPOM have repeatedly condemned the call for an independent Southern Cameroons state, appealing to the Head of State to employ every available means to defend the unitary state (Konings 1999b). Current obsession with autochthony as well as the acute sense of differences between the two provinces since the appointment of Musonge as PM, have pushed North West Fons to create associations of their own to lobby for power and resources for their province<sup>52</sup>. Similarly, in May 1999, Peter Abety, Minister for Special Duties at the Presidency, launched, almost single-handedly, a North West Development Association (NOWEDA) which is yet to prove itself in any way.

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<sup>51</sup>See Cameroon Post, 29 October - 4 November 1996, pp.1 and 9.

<sup>52</sup>Quite typical of the politics of division particularly characteristic of the 1990s in Cameroon, there are two factions of the Fons' conference: The North West Fons' Union (NOWEFU) led by Fon Abumbi “John Ambe of Bafut, and the North West Fons' Conference (NOWEFCO) led by Fon Doh Gah Gwanyin of Balikumbat, the lone CPDM parliamentarian of the province. The latter is said to have manipulated members of government and the Governor into thinking that his faction was more popular, thus straining relations between Governor ‘<ouambo Adrien and NOWEFU. However, President Biya and Prime Minister Musonge apparently endorsed NOWEFU when they both sent representatives with messages of encouragement to the NOWEFU general assembly that met on 5 June 1999 in Bamenda. A development which Fon Doh did not appreciate. See The Herald, 16 May 1999, pp. 1-2; 7 June 1999, pp.1-2; and 11 June 1999, p.2.

Paradoxically, the “Anglophone problem” has enhanced the chances of the Biya loyalists among the Anglophone elite to be appointed to government posts which used to be reserved for Francophones only. Obviously, Biya’s decision to enhance the position of Anglophones in the state apparatus, is a strategy to belie Anglophone charges that Anglophones only play second-fiddle in the Francophone-dominated unitary state and, simultaneously, to attract new members of the Anglophone elite into the “hegemonic alliance” (Bayart 1979). In 1992 the North Westerner Simon Achidi Achu and the South Westerner Ephraim Inoni were appointed respectively Prime Minister and Deputy-Secretary General in the Presidency of the Republic. They, and other highly placed Anglophones, tend to be members of the Anglophone delegations which are regularly sent by Biya from Yaounde to the Anglophone provinces to contest the claims of the leadership of the Anglophone movements and to defend the unitary state. It should, however, be noted that Biya’s new policy of allocating prestigious positions within the state apparatus to his Anglophone allies, has also encouraged internal competition among these privileged allies, particularly between South Westerners and North Westerners (Nyamnjoh 1999). Compared to the North Westerners, South Westerners have felt underrepresented in the highest government offices and have always maintained that South Westerners replace North Westerners in the choicest jobs<sup>53</sup>. So when Peter Mafany Musonge was appointed in September 1996 to take over from Simon Achidi Achu as PM and more South Westerners maintained in key cabinet positions than North Westerners, “the South West people ... went wild with excitement and jubilation and loudly praised the Head of State”, for having at last listened to the cry of despair of South Westerners, who for over thirty-six years, were “confined to the periphery of national politics and socio-economic development”<sup>54</sup>. In the words of Musonge himself, this being “the first time in our history as a united nation that a South Westerner has been appointed prime minister”, South Westerners

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<sup>53</sup>For example, following the January 1996 municipal elections which, according to official results, Prime Minister Achidi Achu (North Westerner) lost at his home constituency of Santa, while Minister of Higher Education Peter Agbor Tabi (South Westerner) won in Mamfe, the latter did not conceal his ambition to take over from Achidi Achu as Prime Minister. See *The Herald*, 1-3 April 1996, pp.1 and 3; and 11-14 April 1996, pp.1 and 2; *Weekly Post*, 5-11 June 1996, pp.1 and 4. In March 1996, the southwestern political analyst and journalist, Churchill Ewumbue-Monono, not only predicted that the next Prime Minister would be Anglophone and South Westerner, but even had the prescience to name Peter Mafany Musonge as the most likely successor: “like Achidi Achu who left Bamenda to become Prime Minister, Musonge could also, leave Limbe to the Star House”. See *Cameroon Post*, 24-30 September 1996, pp.1 and 3.

<sup>54</sup>See “Significance of P.M. Musonge’s Appointment” by a South West elite, Kome Epule, in *The Star Headlines*, 20 November 1996, p.5.



had to “come together to galvanise the second political awakening in the South West Province”, and to “strengthen our position and bargaining power”. At his CPDM congress in December 1996, Paul Biya further strengthened the position of the South Westerners when he admitted more of them into the Central Committee of the party than he did North Westerners; and the 22-member Political Bureau formed after the congress included two South Westerners (John Ebong Ngolle and Dr Mrs Dorothy Njeuma) and one North Westerner only (Tamfu Samuel Ngeh). These developments were interpreted by North West CDPM barons as an indictment of them by the head of state, for failing to contain the SDF and radical Anglophones amongst them. The subsequent creation of a North West Development Association (NOWEDA) by Peter Abety and of the North West Fons’ Union (NOWEFU) and North West Fons’ Conference (NOWEFCO) would be interpreted as an attempt by these barons to get their act together, and begin retrieving lost advantages.

Pro-CPDM South West elite have exploited the massive labour migration from the North West to their province where a plantation economy was established during the German colonial era (Konings 1993; 1998), to amplify the differences between the two provinces. Increasingly, they have tended to accuse the large-scale “settler population” of North West origin, of exploitation, land-grabbing and ingratitude to welcoming indigenes. They have not hesitated using the settler presence to explain all political disturbances in the South West Province, even going as far as insinuating that poor performance at elections by the ruling CPDM and secessionist tendencies among Anglophones could be attributed wholly to the “settler” opposition and dissidents. Thus Fon Njifua of Fontem’s declaration at the joint conference of South West Chiefs and Elites in Buea, July 1999, that no true South Westerner “sympathises” with the SCNC, even though Ndoki Mukete, a South Westerner and SCNC chairman, was in the hall<sup>55</sup>.

The Biya government, like Ahidjo’s, has also relied on a strategy of repression. Lack of unity and severe repression precluded the Anglophone elite from openly expressing its grievances about Francophone domination until 1982, when Biya took power. In the wake of his introduction of a limited degree of liberalisation, the Anglophone elite began voicing its long-standing grievances. In 1983 the Biya government issued an Order modifying the Anglophone General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination by making it a group certificate similar to the Baccalaureate, instead of the single-subject examination that it was. The publication of this Order sparked off an

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<sup>55</sup>cf. The Herald, 21 July 1999, p.3.



Anglophone students' boycott of classes and demonstrations repressed by the police brutality at Yaounde University and in the urban centres in Anglophone Cameroon (Nyamnjoh 1996a), informed or not by student protests elsewhere on the continent. In February 1984, the Biya government changed the official name of the country from the "United Republic of Cameroon" to simply the "Republic of Cameroon" - despite vehement Anglophone protests that this was the name of independent Francophone Cameroon prior to reunification. The new name appeared to deny that the Cameroon state was composed of two distinct identities. Biya argued that the name change was not only a demonstration of the political maturity of the Cameroonian people after almost twenty-five years of independence, but also a sign that the people had finally overcome divisions caused by seventy years of European colonisation (Biya 1987: 6). In Anglophone circles, however, Biya's unilateral name change seems to have given rise to two different interpretations. Some Anglophones consider this action as the boldest step yet taken toward their assimilation and disappearance as a distinct founding community. For them, the new name was clear evidence that, as far as Biya was concerned, the Anglophone territory and people had lost their identity and had become an indistinguishable part of the former Republic of Cameroon, thus carrying out to its intended conclusion Ahidjo's designs to absorb and assimilate the Anglophone minority into the Francophone-dominated state. Other Anglophones argued that by this action La Republique du Cameroun<sup>56</sup> had unilaterally seceded from the union and thus lacks a constitutional base to continue ruling the former Southern Cameroons. They are often inclined to appeal to the United Nations to assist its former Trust Territory in peacefully separating from La Republique. This view was first expressed by the eminent Anglophone lawyer and first president of the Cameroon Bar Association, Fon Gorji Dinka. On 20 March 1985, Dinka addressed a memorandum to Paul Biya entitled "The New Social Order". In this memorandum, he declared the Biya government to be unconstitutional and called for the Southern Cameroons to become independent and to be rebaptized as the Republic of Ambazonia. Dinka was arrested and imprisoned without trial until January 1986, which transformed him into an Anglophone martyr<sup>57</sup>. In the same year at the same time (i.e. during the Bamenda Congress of the single party), two memoranda were

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<sup>56</sup>Reference to the incumbent regime as the government of La Republique du Cameroun, the name adopted by Francophone Cameroon at independence, has become a key signifier in the plotting of the nation's constitutional history as a progressive consolidation of the recolonisation of Anglophone Cameroon by the post-colonial Francophone-dominated state. See Eyoh 1998b: 264.

<sup>57</sup>See Fon Gorji Dinka's *The New Social Order*, dated 20 March 1985, addressed to H.E. Comrade P. Biya at the Bamenda CNU party congress (mimeo).

submitted to the participants by members of the North West and South West elite resident in Douala. These documents drew the attention of the participants to the Anglophone plight and highlighted that the Anglophone elite felt side-lined from political power<sup>58</sup>.

In 1993, the Biya government, through the Vice Chancellor Dr Mrs Dorothy Njeuma, did not allow the convenors to hold the MCI on the premises of the University of Buea. In 1994, it attempted to obstruct the organisation of MCII, using the idea that Anglophones had come “together in Bamenda to declare secession” as an excuse for repression. Leaders of the Anglophone movements tend to be harassed by security forces, threatened with arrest, and subjected to travelling restrictions, although such state repression is not always effective thanks to sabotage and tip-offs by some servants of the regime sympathetic to the Anglophone cause. In general, repression has increased with mounting threats of the proclamation of an independent Southern Cameroons state. SCNC rallies and demonstrations are officially banned in the Anglophone provinces. Repression was particularly severe in the aftermath of an attack of the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) on some military and civil establishments in the Bui and Mezam Divisions of the North West Province on 27-28 March 1997.

The SCYL emerged in the mid-1990s as one of the many Anglophone associations that operated under the umbrella of the SCNC. Being composed of “young people who do not see any future for themselves and who would prefer to die fighting than continue to submit to the fate imposed on Southern Cameroons by La Republique”<sup>59</sup>, the SCYL aimed at becoming the militant wing of the SCNC. Its original leadership was largely made up of Anglophone members of the former University of Yaounde students’ union, the so-called ‘Parlement’, which was engaged in several violent confrontations with the university authorities and the Biya government during the period 1990-1996<sup>60</sup>. The SCYL became soon dissatisfied with the SCNC whose leadership continued to adhere to a strategy of peaceful dialogue with the Francophone-dominated state for either a return to a federal state or outright secession, manifest in its motto: “the force of argument” - notwithstanding the Biya government’s persistent refusal to enter into negotiations with the SCNC and its vehement repression of SCNC activities. The SCYL leadership cut its relationship with the SCNC in November 1996 and placed itself under the

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<sup>58</sup>These documents can be found in Mukong 1990.

<sup>59</sup>See Mr Fidelis Chiabi, chairman of the former Anglophone Youth Council, in *Cameroon Post*, 1-2 February 1994, p.7.

<sup>60</sup>For the “parlement” at the University of Yaounde, see, for instance, A.D. Lisinge, *The Philosophy the behind University Crisis* (no date and publisher indicated).

umbrella of a newly established Southern Cameroons Independence Restoration Council (SCIRC). It now aimed at creating an independent Southern Cameroons state through armed rebellion, manifest in its motto: “the argument of force”. Still in the process of preparing for action in both Anglophone provinces, it was unexpectedly faced with the detention of its chairman, Mr Akwanga Ebenezer Mbongo, following his attempted theft of explosives from the Razel Company at Jakiri in the night of 23-24 March 1997. It immediately reacted by attacking some military and civil establishments in the North West Province on 27-28 March 1997. According to official reports, three gendarmes and seven unidentified assailants were killed in these operations. Government repression of this ill-planned revolt was out of proportion. It ruthlessly killed, tortured, raped and arrested several local men and women, forcing even more of them to go into exile. Above all, it seized the opportunity to clamp down on the SDF and SCNC, accusing both organisations of being responsible for the uprising<sup>61</sup>. A considerable number of SCNC members were arrested and imprisoned in Yaounde. Since the uprising, the government has regularly accused the SCNC of importing weapons and inciting the Anglophone population to armed rebellion. On 29 December 1999, Southern Cameroons “independence fighters” captured the radio station at Buea and broadcast a recorded message, read by Justice Fred Ebong, who has been closely connected with the SCYL, proclaiming the independence of the Southern Cameroons. On 7 January 2000, they hoisted the United Nations and Federation flags in Victoria (Limbe). Justice Ebong and other “suspects” were subsequently detained and political activities were proscribed in the South West Province<sup>62</sup>. In March 2000, Justice Ebong, still in prison, was elected chairman of the SCNC.

### **Mass Media and Anglophone Disempowerment**

One of the instruments which the Francophone-dominated state has relied on to implement their various strategies for disempowering Anglophones in Cameroon has been the media. By seeking total ownership and control of the

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<sup>61</sup>In a report that was full of factual errors and based on spurious evidence, *Jeune Afrique Economie* supported the Biya government’s allegation that the SCNC was responsible for the revolt. See *Jeune Afrique Economie*, No.239, 14 April 1997, p.8. The journal’s support of the Biya government’s allegation is not altogether surprising. Titus Edzoa, a former Secretary-General at the Presidency, once revealed that the journal was used for public relations purposes by the regime. To this end, the regime had funded the journal to the tune of FCFA 1.5 billion (or US \$ 3 million).

<sup>62</sup>This account is based on various SCYL reports and our interviews with some SCYL leaders.

broadcast media while using draconian laws to stifle the private press, the state has, over the years, stunted Anglophone freedom, weakened solidarity among Anglophones, and dealt their sense of identity a crippling blow. Government media policies and practices and how they affected the Anglophones prior to 1990 have been well documented (cf. Nyamnjoh 1989; and 1990); so also has the particularly difficult legal environment wherein the private press has operated since 1990 (cf. Nyamnjoh 1996b and c). In this section therefore, we focus on how the government has employed the state media -broadcasting especially, to deny Anglophone identity and solidarity, while tacitly encouraging the rise and proliferation of ethnic and regional print media.

### **Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) and Anglophone Identity**

With the launching of the SDF in 1990, the Anglophone journalists in the official media, in general, tended to distance themselves from the sort of pro-establishment journalism defined by government and largely taken for granted by their Francophone colleagues. The history of turbulence in the official media was principally the history of government's attempt to streamline the Anglophone journalists. The launching of the SDF led to much witch-hunting against the Anglophone journalists in CRTV; whom management identified with the new ("illegal") party. The witch-hunt was quite understandable, for while Zacharie Ngniman, Antoine-Marie Ngono and other Francophone journalists presented the unsigned and undated communique from Minister Henri Bandolo as if this were verified information, Julius Wamey, on his part, insisted that his broadcast was the government's version of events in Bamenda. Relations between CRTV authorities and critical Anglophone journalists only grew worse following the institutionalization of multipartyism, leading to claims in the private press of an "anti-Anglophone campaign" mounted by government and CRTV management. Much of this has been well documented (cf. Nyamnjoh 1996b), but here are a few examples.

*Cameroon Post*<sup>63</sup> reports on a meeting the Minister of Information and Culture held, the first week of June 1991, with CRTV journalists, during which the minister "implicitly" accused English language programmes of being sympathetic to the opposition. Specifically cited were "Luncheon Date" - later on modified drastically by order of the minister, "News Focus", the 7.30 p.m. news and "Cameroon Calling" from which Anembom Munjo, Wain Paul Ngam, Asonglefac Nkemleke and Julius Wamey were subsequently suspended. The minister also attacked TV News Editor-in-Chief Eric Chinje "for

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<sup>63</sup>Cameroon Post, 6-13 June 1991, p.1

reporting the resignation of CPOM Wouri Section President Jean Jacques Ekindi without announcing the non-resignation of Mifi Section President Joseph K. Tanyi”. The minister implied that this was part of the Anglophone journalists’ attempts to sabotage the CPOM government. The suspensions were interpreted by the journalists as “part of a campaign launched by the Information and Culture Minister and CRTV General Manager Mendo Ze to stop the tide of Anglophone journalists’ objectivity on CRTV”. The minister insisted on the necessity of CRTV journalists to respect the corporation’s editorial policy, a euphemism for asking all journalists to see things the government’s way. Julius Wamey was accused of having “falsely” claimed during a CRTV news flash that the South West Chiefs meeting in Kumba had called for a national conference, and that students marching in Bamenda had done same. The governor of the North West Province, in a telex to MINAT, was reported to have wondered “why government media organs are being used by journalists who are partisan to the SDF”.

In a “confidential” letter to the General Manager of CRTV, Prime Minister Sadou Hayatou<sup>64</sup> was said to have called for severe sanctions against Anglophone journalists who were using the official media to “try government”. The Prime Minister was reported to have accused, among others, “Cameroon Calling” and the English news of having “more and more exhibited reckless abandon ... in their analysis which have of late seemed like an arraignment of government action”. In his letter he complained that “newscasters on radio and television have tended to express their personal standpoints as if they were those of government”. He concluded by instructing the General Manager to “verify this situation and where necessary address a severe warning to such personnel who should not turn a public service into a private media with a tendency to teleguide government action”.

While some Anglophone journalists in the public media, their disillusionment notwithstanding, identified with the PR role expected of them by government, others opted either to leave the system entirely (e.g. Boh Herbert, Charlie Ndichia, Eric Chinje, Victor Epie Ngome, Orlando Barna, Larry Eyong-Echaw, Ben Bongang and Julius Wamey), or to distance themselves from official rhetoric whenever they could (e.g. Ebssiy Ngum, Wain Paul Ngam and Asonglefac Nkemleke). According to *The Diasporan*<sup>65</sup>, of the nearly 50 reporters and announcers who started or joined television in its

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<sup>64</sup>See Cameroon Post, 30 July - 6 August 1991, p.3.

<sup>65</sup>See *The Diasporan*, 14 April 1995, which devotes its front and central pages to television in Cameroon, “a revolution that ate its children”. The articles or testimonies are by Eric Chinje, Julius Wamey, Melissa Nambangi and Orlando Bama, all of whom are former CRTV journalists living and/or studying in the USA. *The Diasporan* is US-based and has as Editor-in-Chief Julius Wamey.

first three years of existence, 27 (of whom 21 Anglophones) had, by April 1994, “departed in bitterness and disillusionment to seek better climes”. Those who opted for government PR journalism, claimed that all the government and its acolytes did was well and in the best interest of Anglophones and Cameroon in general, and that the radical opposition, the All Anglophone Conference (MC) and the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM) were void of true patriots and motivated only by selfish, regional, or tribal self-interests. These, CRTV management would encourage with appointments to key positions, and eventually, the impression would be created that the critical journalists were from the North West Province while their pro-establishment counterparts were from the South West Province. Selective appointment of South West journalists to strategic positions would further drive this message home.

However, the critical journalists were convinced that the radical opposition and extremist pressure groups they supported stood for “the truth” and the best interest of Anglophones and of Cameroon, and that the government and its acolytes were dissemblers motivated by selfish ambitions, the greed for power and other selfish pursuits. Many Anglophone journalists in CRTV who rapidly distanced themselves from their role as government spokesmen or mouthpieces following the launching of the SDF, thus rechanneled their energies in the service of the marginalized Anglophone community. But using the official media to articulate societal problems and aspirations met with stiff resistance from the authorities (Nyarnnjoh 1996b).

In general, Anglophones feel CRTV does not cater for their interests. According to Philip Ndi<sup>66</sup>, this is because “there is nobody who actually represents the Anglophones at CRTV”, and “decisions are taken arbitrarily and nobody raises an eye brow”. He argues that “many decisions are taken not only to frustrate Anglophone journalists but to minimise and discredit their efforts”.

As an institution, CRTV has seldom been comfortable reporting the truth about any Anglophone movement, initiative or programme of action. An example of CRTV’s unprofessional journalism in this connection is that of the 3 p.m. radio news of 27 April 1994 concerning the second All Anglophone Conference (AACII). An announcement was read to the effect that the AACII scheduled to hold in Bamenda from 29 April to 1 May had been postponed by the convenors. It was purported to have been signed by Dr Simon Munzu, Dr Carlson Anyangwe and Barrister Sam Ekontang Elad. A claim the three refuted. The MC spokesman, Dr Simon Munzu, prepared a disclaimer for

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<sup>66</sup>The Herald, 13-20 January 1993, p.4.



broadcast by CRTV, but this was rejected. CRTV was even unable to provide Dr Munzu with a copy of the announcement alleged to have been signed by him and his colleagues<sup>67</sup>.

Anglophones are of the consistent impression that CRTV is there not so much to respond to their aspirations, but rather to stifle initiative and sense of identity in them. The choice to construct the FM transmitter for the South West Province in Douala instead, was criticised by Anglophone interest groups (e.g. SWELA) and by the media, and taken as another proof of government's bad faith towards the Anglophones. To some, the Francophone authorities were so concerned with the oil in Limbe that they feared what might happen if Buea, given the prevailing trend of sentiments among critical Anglophone leaders and public, were to be cut off from the rest of Cameroon and made capital for a seceding West or Southern Cameroons. So many people thought that the government wanted to be in control of access to radio technology, to be able to cut off transmission should the need arise<sup>68</sup>.

To Anglophones, it is clear from the content and language of programs that television is preponderantly for Francophones. French is the dominant language and French interests seem not only more important than English interests, but are even superior to Cameroonian concerns and priorities. It is possible and indeed quite regular that newscasts on CRTV are shifted (displaced) from their normal time slots in order to make way for the transmission of French football encounters. Hardly has any English league match been retransmitted in a similar manner, and it is not often that local matches or Cameroon's own international encounters get televised (Atanga 1994).

Thus faced with such resistance, critical Anglophone journalists in the official media, thanks to the December 1990 communication law, used the English language private newspapers, some of them under pen names, to insert Anglophone problems, concerns and aspirations on the national political, cultural and economic agendas. Together with their counterparts in the critical English language press, the liberation journalists of the official media were eager to expose the contradictions and inconsistencies in the policies and actions of the Cameroonian leadership. They argued that until government started addressing the problems of the Anglophone minority in Cameroon, it will remain an obstacle to the country's economic progress and social justice. They criticised the rigid suppression by government of contending social forces, especially those of Anglophone origin. They blame

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<sup>67</sup>For more, see Cameroon Post, 29 April - 1 May 1994, p.2.

<sup>68</sup>For more on the FM affair. see The Herald, 3-5 January 1994, p.3; Cameroon Post, 24 November - 1 December 1993, p.13.



most of Cameroon's current socio-political and economic crises on the lack of accountability of successive Francophone dominated governments, and present the Anglophone and the rigour and selflessness in public service in "the good old days" of Southern Cameroons as the model. They identified with, and were proud of, the achievements of the Anglo-Saxon culture world-wide. In their view, the Anglo-Saxon culture, "has been tested and its validity adequately proved", and all Anglophones must take advantage of this identity, "rather than seeking to be Francophones only to wind up ridiculous cultural mulattos to be jeered at and patronised"<sup>69</sup>. And in this endeavour, their "heroes" received commendation from the Cameroon Association of English-Speaking Journalists (CAMASEJ)<sup>70</sup>.

However, the rising tides of the politics of belonging, the failure of the opposition to make a striking difference and the weakening of the leadership of the SCNC, have combined with the arrogance and confidence -of those in power, to silence many a journalist that was once critical in CRTV. Many have left and of those who have stayed on, most have chosen to conform. Once again, the policy of divide-and-rule has triumphed, and Anglophoneness has ended the loser.

### **The Print Media and Anglophone Identity**

If in the first three years of the current democratic process one could identify a consensus on the Anglophone problem in the Anglophone press, this is much less the case today. The increased importance of regional and ethnic politics has indeed been matched by a redefinition of editorial policy on the part of some existing papers, or by the creation of new mouthpieces to take care of ethnic interests. Papers such as *The Weekly Post*, *The Star Headlines* and *The Oracle* have been created to focus on regional issues of interest to the South West Province and SWELA, and to define themselves essentially in opposition to the grassfielders (both the "settlers" in the diaspora and those still in their North West and Western Provinces of origin). With the advent of the Grand SAWA movement, they have now extended their interests to include what the movement stands for in general. Newer papers such as *Elimbi*, *Muendi*, *The Beacon* and *Fako International* (Mendi me Fako) have been created to attend more specifically to the political ambitions of the SAWA elite in the Littoral and South West Provinces, and to oppose Grassfields hegemony as a matter of policy. Since 1996, little escapes criticism or comments by this press, including inter-tribal wars in the North West,

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<sup>69</sup>Cameroon Post, 27-30 May 1991, p.6.

<sup>70</sup>See *Le Messenger*, 28 February 1992, p.10.

which it uses to deride the war-mongering nature of grassfielders and their penchant for fighting over land. During elections the press sought, through the rhetoric of “ethnic cleansing” to solve problems of political representation, and to encourage a widespread antagonism to “strangers” as parasites and “traitors in the house” (Collectif Changer le Cameroun (C3) 1994; Eboussi Boulaga 1997; Jua 1997). They sought to achieve, through a language of ethnicity, the necessary level of fear that any kind of mixture with “dubious settlers” will in the end be damaging to the interests of the minority.

As Wang Sonne (1997: 188-189) notes, the first issue of *Elimbi* on 26 March 1996 coincided with the launching of the SAWA movement. Initially a bi-monthly, *Elimbi* became a weekly in November 1996, as the politics of belonging heated up. It described itself as “a regional newspaper” that targeted the people of the coast, paying attention in particular to the activities and news of the coastal elite. But *Elimbi*'s most striking feature was “the production and dissemination of ideas hostile to the Bamileke”. In February 1997 (eve of the March legislative elections), the proprietor of *Elimbi*, John Mandengue Epee, a native Douala businessman who a couple of years back had initiated a libel case that ended in the imprisonment of Paddy Mbawa of *Cameroon Post*, launched a monthly - *Muendi*, with the mission of further defending SAWA identity and intensifying the anti-Bamileke feeling in Douala.

The grassfielders also used the private press to fight back. In a similar manner, existing papers redefined their editorial focus, while new ethnic or regional papers sprung up. The Bamileke and North West elite used established papers, most of which they owned and/or controlled, to riposte the attack by the SAWA press, interpreting the January 1996 constitutional changes as an impediment to the democratic process. The sheer volume of diatribes, commentaries, opinions and reports related to “autochtonie” and “allogenie” (indigene/settler) in grassfields newspapers such as *La Nouvelle Expression*, *Le Messager*, *The Post* and *The Herald*, were an indication of how absorbing the politics of belonging had become since 1996, with equally blatantly ethnic papers like *Ouest Echo* and *Nde Echo* leading the show. Paradoxically, although about belonging, the Anglophone problem in Cameroon has become drowned by a press and government obsessed with a different kind of belonging<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup>It is, however, noteworthy that the editorial line of the Francophone Grassfields newspapers, such as *La Nouvelle Expression* and *Le Messager*, in respect of the anglophone problem does not essentially differ from the government's position.

## Conclusion

The reactivation of Anglophone identity during the political liberalisation process, manifest in the emergence of both the SDF, the first opposition party in the country, and several Anglophone organisations and associations, posed a serious threat to the regime in power and the unitary state. Little wonder that the Biya government was keen to neutralise the Anglophone danger and to deconstruct the Anglophone identity which tended to unite people in the Anglophone territory across ethnic-regional boundaries based on a common colonial heritage.

In this study we have shown that the regime has been quite successful in this endeavour, employing several strategies. One strategy has been the regime's persistent refusal to enter into any meaningful negotiations with the Anglophone leadership about either a return to the federal state or peaceful secession and its concomitant resort to outright repression of Anglophone movements and actions. Faced with this government strategy, the Anglophone leadership, in turn, has proved incapable of reconsidering its own tactics, clinging instead to its motto: "the force of argument". As a result, it has dismally failed to deliver the promised goods. It is now evident that the Anglophone struggles have lost their initial momentum and that the Anglophone movements are more and more subject to inertia and internal schisms. Particularly the Anglophone youth has increasingly advocated the "argument of force".

Another government strategy has been to establish control over the state media, punishing any journalist who dared to propagate Anglophone identity and solidarity, and to tacitly promote the rise and proliferation of ethnic and regional print media.

Again another government strategy has been to capitalise on the existing divide between the coastal/forest and grassfields people in the Anglophone territory, which is mainly rooted in the increasing resentment of South Westerners about large-scale settlement and economic and political domination of North Westerners in their region. In the ongoing struggles for economic and political power during the current political liberalisation process, South West ethnic-regional identity has been boosted by the 1996 constitution, which promised state protection for "autochthonous" minorities, leading to growing resistance of "autochthonous" South Westerners against "dominant and exploitative" North Western "settlers", "strangers", or "cam-no-goes" in their region and various forms of "ethnic Cleansing". The regime also appears to have promoted the construction of new ethnic identities, in particular the Grand SAWA movement - an alignment of the ethnic-related coastal elite in

the South West Province and neighbouring Francophone provinces on the basis of common feelings of exploitation and domination by grassfields “settlers”. The emergence of the SAWA movement had another devastating effect on the Anglophone identity, the Francophone-Anglophone divide becoming cross-cut by alliances that oppose coastal versus grassfields elites. Of late, however, one may observe certain cracks in Sawa solidarity. First, there is a growing feeling among the Littoral elite that they have gained less than the South West elite in terms of political nominations. Some Douala leaders, like Jean-Jacques Ekindi, have even warned the South West elite that they do not want to see Bamileke domination replaced by South West domination. Second, without the North Westerners to blame or scapegoat since the appointment of Musonge as PM in September 1996, the South West chiefs and elites are finding it increasingly difficult convincing their peoples to stay committed to President Biya and the CPDM with promises and good intentions alone. This was evident at a joint conference of chiefs and elites in Buea in July 1999, where the idea of reviving SWELA was examined with little enthusiasm or support from Caven Nnoko Mbelle and Martin Nkemngu, its rival secretary generals of the early 1990s<sup>72</sup>. It is thus possible yet that more and more of the disenchanted Anglophone masses would see through the smokescreen of divisions of convenience mounted by their elite under the patronage of a monolithic state at odds with multiparty democracy.

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<sup>72</sup>See The Herald, 21 July 1999, pp.1-4, for the resolutions of, a critical report and an editorial on, the joint conference of South West Chiefs and Elite which was held at Buea on 17 July 1999.

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## Citizenship, Alienation and Environmental Conflict in Africa: Categorical Imperatives for Peaceful Co-existence in the Twenty-First Century

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### Abstract

*The end of the Cold War has given due prominence to studies on environmental factors and resources. This prominence is realised at two levels: the internal and the external. At the external level, international economic agents have expressed their interests in the extraction of resources. Moreover, international concerns over the control of environmental resources have triggered off crises of an alarming sort between countries. At the internal level, the desire to realise the privileges and rights of citizenship has also rekindled interests in the distribution of those 'internally discovered' resources. The precarious nature of these interests has, in recent times, provoked crisis and conflict both within and outside of Africa. With focus on Africa, this study seeks to explore two issues of concomitant importance. In the first place, it seeks to interrogate the nature and cause of environmental crises that are more of internal relevance and dimension in Africa, particularly; in countries, like Nigeria, with strategic resources through which it derives its foreign exchange earnings. In the light of a plethora of views on the causes of these crises, this study aims to place a thematic focus on the concept of citizenship and alienation (exclusion) as valid theoretical capstone for explicating the nature and causes of these environmental conflicts and crises. This study concludes that an enlightened disquisition on the concept of citizenship and alienation, and their place in the understanding of environmental conflict in a country like Nigeria, for instance, allows for the transcending of boundaries on citizenship claims and stakes. It also provides the bridgehead for proffering certain categorical imperatives that ensure peaceful coexistence within a multinational country like Nigeria and most other similar experiences.*

### Introduction

This paper attempts to place a thematic focus on the concept of citizenship and alienation as valid theoretical capstone for explicating the

causes of environmental conflict and crises in Africa. In order to capture the essence of the theoretical issues to be raised and to give some empirical content to the analysis, I shall draw examples from experiences in Nigeria. This is based on the conviction that the macrocosm of environmental conflict in Nigeria can be seen in the light of the problems of citizenship and the related component of alienation. Hence, the central thesis is the view that environmental conflict in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta, taken to its zenith by the Ogoni case in 1995 and recent disturbance in the Warri case are the outcome of disparate attitudes on the question of citizenship occasioned by the problems of alienation. The choice of Nigeria in this analysis is predicated on some premises: one, the abundant and abounding talents and manpower abilities, two, the abundance of mineral and natural resources; three, the extremely powerful advantage of an overwhelming population on the African continent; four, the strategic location of the country in the African geographical setting; five environmental and ecological advantages in terms of weather and climate; six, the multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural nature of the country. In the title of this paper, three concepts appear particularly interesting to consider. These are: citizenship, alienation and environmental conflict. I shall, starting from the last, make some conceptual analysis of these concepts. What is conflict? How do we conceive the environment?

### **The concept of conflict: some theoretical analysis**

Perhaps the most enduring, even if not the most accurate, image of Africa in the seventies, eighties and nineties has been that of a continent of violence perennially on the edge of survival. Africa, thus, stands Singled out as a continent of uniquely violent politics, a continent where force makes the everyday life of the people even more demeaning and demanding than in other poorer parts of the world.<sup>73</sup>

How conflicts and violence should be tagged is still an issue of debate and controversy. Ordinarily, a state of conflict is said to exist where there is interaction between at least two individuals or groups whose ultimate objectives differ (Nicholson, 1972). In the case of violence, Girvetz (1974:185) has defined violence as “harm perpetrated on persons or property ranging, in the case of persons, from restraining their freedom of movement to torture and death, and, in the case of property, from simple fine or damage to complete expropriation or total destruction.”

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<sup>73</sup>See Patrick Chabal, *Power in Africa* (1990:179). For a contrary view, see David Laitin, *Hegemony and culture* (1986: ix).

It must be understood, however, that the concept of conflict is multidimensional; it envelopes a family of forms. We select one depending on our analytical framework, purposes and practical problems. Since theoretical constructs are not appropriated from everyday life before being given their specialised and technical meanings, such an analysis not only aid our thinking, it also gives it direction. Moreover, it creates room for a correct application of our theoretical concept in an analysis of the causes of the peculiar patterns of conflicts given certain social condition. An attempt will be made to focus attention on the concept of environmental conflict. However, the source of environmental conflict cannot be divorced from the political setting operative in a given society, hence its close connection with the idea of political conflict.

### **Conflicts and their political dimensions**

Conflicts that have an incidence, directly or indirectly, on the direction and content of public policy are political conflicts. In essence, political conflict is ultimately about publicly determined access to public goods and services. Such goods and services, we may note, may be as a result of environmental exploitation and exploration. For example, government's direct policy on deforestation and forest resources becomes a political matter, especially when it is implemented to restrict or deny certain groups access. In this case, any conflict that erupts as a result of such a policy may centre on the distribution of the rights and privileges available in the public domain. The key to understanding political violence and conflict argues Neiburg (1969) "must be found in the dynamics of bargaining relationships rather than in the chance issues of the conflict." The nature of political conflict therefore resides or is situated in the structure of power and the various attitudes or social behaviours that spell or dictate access to it.

It is against this background that Miall suggested four criteria as useful in describing a conflict situation with its attendant political dimensions. According to Miall:

1. A conflict can only exist where the participants perceive it as such;
2. A clear difference of opinion regarding values, interests, aims, or relations must lie at the heart of a political conflict;
3. The parties in a conflict may be either states or significant element of the population within the state;
4. The outcome of a conflict must be considered extremely important by the parties (Miall, 1992).

Political conflict, however, does not lie in mere differences of opinion, values, etc. It is the desire or resolve to achieve those differences of opinion

and interests put into action, that denote or describe, properly the conflictuality. It is to this end that Lewis Coser (1958:8) describes conflict as a “struggle over values, claims to status power and scarce resources in which the aims of the ‘opposing’ parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals.” Conflict may suggest to us an idea of or picture of a struggle, but then it is not in every case that opponents are eliminated, if we take the notion of elimination literally. For instance, someone may lose the position of dominance but not be totally denied or bereft of status, power or resources, nor eliminated in the sense in which it is couched above.

Descriptively, political conflict can be seen as a situation of interaction involving two or more parties in whose actions are in pursuit of incompatible objectives, or interests, resulting in varying degrees of discord (Deng, 1996:220). Charles Tilly has argued that conflicts “seem to grow most directly from the struggles for established places in the structure of power” (1969:34-45). It is the struggle for access to opportunities, to the existing rights and privileges of society which define citizenship within the nation-state. The nature of the prevailing political order and the social morality it sponsors or promotes are crucial elements that go into the nature and pattern of conflicts occurring in such polity. In Nigeria, however, the struggle for places of power appears to have evolved a peculiar pattern. Empirical sociological evidences, seems to demonstrate the validity of the view that conflict in Nigeria is about identity. The logic of conflict seems to be rooted in the problem of identity. In what follows, I shall attempt to establish the relation between the problems of alienation and citizenship, and their effects on the generation of environmental conflict and violence in Nigeria. But then, how do we conceive the environment? And, in what does the environmental conflict consist in?

### **Environment and resources: Some basic analyses**

Since the end of the Cold War, more prominence has been given to the role of environmental factors in shaping global security and international relations (Klare and Thomas 1994 and Miller, 1995:113). In a nutshell, the environment or ecology has generated much interest in the relation between countries and within countries. This interest can be located within two realms: the realm of the theoretical and that of the practical. It is intellectually correct to state that the practical gave birth to the theoretical. Simply stated, the practical was borne out of the struggle within and between states for the control, exploitation, manipulation and access to ecological resources. The attendant problems which these tendencies have generated have been the

stimulating tonic for academic research and the production of intellectual energies and output in terms of resolutions, agreement, laws, conventions, etc.<sup>74</sup>. But first, what is ecology or the environment? What are the crucibles of the environment?

Ecology is about understanding the relationship between living organisms and their living and non-living surroundings<sup>75</sup>. In a related sense, the term environment is defined to include “water, air, land and all plants and human beings or animals living therein and the interrelationships which exist amongst these or any of them (FEPA. 1988). John Rau and David Wooten, in an edited work, defined the environment as:

*the whole complex of physical, social, cultural, economic and aesthetic factors which affect individuals and communities and ultimately determine their term, character, relationships and survival.*

They went further to categorize the dimensions of the environment into four, namely:

(a) the physical environment (natural and constructed) which includes: land and climate, vegetation, wildlife, the surrounding land uses and the physical character of an area, infrastructure, public services, air, noise and water pollutions;

(b) the social environment which includes community facilities and services and the character of community facilities and services and the character of communities;

(c) the aesthetic environment, scenic areas, vistas, views including the architectural character of buildings;

(d) the economic environment which includes employment, land ownership, pattern and land values.

Three basic factors combine to determine the impact of human society on the environment. These are: the number of people, the average individual's level of consumption or affluence, and the technology used to produce outputs. The underlying truth can be seen in Simon de Beauvoir's argument that:

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<sup>74</sup>An instance is the Stockholm Conference of 1972 held from 5th to 16th June, organised by United Nations Conference on Human Environment. See also Resolution 2996 of the United Nations General Assembly of December 15, 1972.

<sup>75</sup>Council on Environment Quality, First Annual Report, August 1970 (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1970), p.6.

*Mankind, the universe, and history are “detotalized totalities” that is, separation does not exclude relation, nor vice versa. Society exists only by means of the existence of particular individuals ... each finite to each other, though they are open to the infinity of the future, and their individual forms thereby imply each other without destroying each other (1996:36).*

There has always been a one-to-one relationship between the level of population and use, control and access to resources found in the environment. In cases where such resources are strategic, the desire for control has been found not only limited to the population of the country concerned; also, external economic agents within the international system have been contending factors in the use, control and access to such resources. Lewis Coser, in defining conflict hinted at the view that conflict can be described as the “struggle over values, claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the ‘opposing’ parties are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals. The idea of the impact of the population, the idea of scarce resources and the pattern of denial of access to such resources are the tripod stand on which this study aims to interrogate citizenship, alienation and environmental conflict in Africa, with examples drawn from Nigeria. The population of a particular country refers to its citizens. Conflict over resources stems from denial of the rights and privileges of citizenships. The concept of population is inherent in environment, and environment is likewise implied in population. The process of interaction between the two, plus the mediating role of the Nigerian state in the uncontrolled commercialisation of natural resource (soil in this case), without a corresponding improvement in the living standards of the people, particularly the inhabitants of the oil-producing areas, have contributed significantly to the occurrence of conflict and violence.

### **Citizenship rights, alienation and environmental conflict in Nigeria: history and some background issues**

In November 1995, an Ogoni playwright, Ken Saro Wiwa and eight other Nigerians were executed for complicity in the murder of four prominent Ogoni chiefs after being found guilty by a military’ tribunal. Almost immediately, the domino effect of that spiralled: (1) the immediate suspension of Nigeria from the Commonwealth, an organisation she joined in 1960 after gaining independence, (2) the West and South Africa castigated the government for the judicial murder. This action nearly turned the country into



a pariah nation with little or no friends in the international community. The series of events that led to tire conflict is historic.

This history of environmental conflict in Nigeria stems from the desire of the state, engineered by the ethnic group having access and monopoly over power, to control total rents from oil without a corresponding improvement in the living standards of the immediate inhabitants of the oil producing areas. Its attitudes to these inhabitants are a direct reflection of its neglect of the entire society, at large. According to Rowell:

*Oil and environmental conflict are rooted in the inequitable social relations that undergird the production and distribution of profits from oil, and its adverse impact on the fragile ecosystem of the Niger Delta. It involves the Nigerian State and oil companies, on one side, and the six million productions and distribution of profits from oil, and its adverse impact on the fragile ecosystem of the Niger Delta. It involves the Nigerian State and oil companies on one side, and the six million people of the estimated eight hundred oil producing communities, concentrated in the seventy thousand kilometre Niger Delta, on the other.*<sup>76</sup>

In contention is the oil-rich environment, the manner of distributing its wealth and the survival of its inhabitants who depend on the ecosystem for their basic needs and livelihood. The host communities of the Niger Delta are of the view that since oil is mined in their land, and they suffer from the pollution and environmental degradation attendant to oil production, they have the right to adequate compensation, a clean and safe environment, and a fair share of oil rents, while the state and its partners, the multinationals, insist on the optimization of rents and profits on the basis of the modalities defined exclusively' by the partnership.

An obvious deduction from the scenario is the factuality of domination of power and politics in Nigeria by the ethnic group in control of the state since independence, and the alienation of other groups as marginalized groups. This process is described by, Myron Weiner in the following words:

*In country after country, a single ethnic group has taken control over the state and used its powers to exercise control over and used its power to exercise control over others... In retrospect, there has been far less 'nation-building' than many analysts had expected or hoped, for the process of state-building has rendered many ethnic groups devoid of power or influence (Weiner, 1987).*

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<sup>76</sup>A. Rowell, Shell-Shocked: The environmental and Social Costs of Living with Shell in Nigeria. (Amsterdam Greenpeace, 1994).

This is what Myron Weiner tagged the development of a ‘mono-ethnic tendency’. The history of this tendency can be traced to the role of the colonial state in its control and distribution of the resources of the colony to the advantage of the British foreign interests it represented. The colonial state was principally an instrument of domination, and as such, it was not representative of the views of the colony. It sponsored only the economic policies of the interest it represented. To this end, the resources were used to advance British interests. After independence, the colonial state gave way to the post-colonial state, controlled by the ethnic group that succeeded in controlling state power. In the federal arrangement in Nigeria, the federal government had the sole prerogative of the control of state resources.

Moreover, it was responsible for the allocation of revenue to the various units that form the federation. According to Nnoli, “revenue allocation in Nigeria was always approached from the point of view of inter-ethnic-struggle for the national cake” (1995: 103). In one word, the crucial asset being the control of the rents from oil. This can be deduced from the following thus:

*In the inter-ethnic struggle for resources in Nigeria, the most crucial asset was control of the federal government. Two major historical factors account for this. One is the partisan character of the state ... the state was biased in group struggles and made no pretence about being neutral in inter-group relations. The other factor is associated with the interventionist role of the state in the economic life of the society. It was the state that set up capitalism in the country. Therefore, it actively intervened in production and distribution of goods and services, often in favour of one or the other of the contending groups and classes (Nnoli, 1995:104).*

Historically, therefore, the occurrence of conflict over access and control of resources in the Niger Delta can be traced to the inherent contradiction that exists in Nigeria’s federal set-up. The most critical point perhaps revolves around the oil-producing minority nationalities of the Niger Delta and the Nigerian State and its destabilizing potential, when combined with other internal contradictions. These sets of internal contradictions can be traced to the existence of disparate attitudes to Nigerian citizenship and the related component of alienation. How do we then conceive of citizenship in Nigeria? And, what accounts for the alienation?

## Citizenship status and alienation in Nigeria: the case of the Niger Delta

At the beginning of the 1990s, citizenship emerged an important concept in socio-political discussions and discourses. As a term, citizenship denotes, opines Crompton, “full and participating membership of a nation-state, that is, it does not necessarily incorporate all persons resident within a given territory” (1993:139). In a related sense, Hill argued that the concept of citizenship embraces a range of positions, traditionally guaranteed to all members of society. He further argued, however, that citizenship is about power and its distribution, about the framework of public and thus collective decisions, and accountability for those decisions (1994:4). With respect to power, different attitudes to citizenship notions lie beneath the problems of integration in the political sociology of developing nations. According to Bryan Turner, “the problem of citizenship has re-emerged as an issue which is central, not only to practical political questions concerning access to health care systems, education and the welfare state, but also to traditional theoretical debates in sociology over the conditions of social integration and social solidarity” (1990: 189).

Citizenship as a concept in political and philosophical theories is not subject to a single universally acceptable definition. Citizenship, in its modern form, consists of three essential and central propositions: the notion of individual and human rights the idea of political participation and the principles of socio-economic welfare. The main significance of the concept of citizenship is its relation with the conferring of rights and duties. Hence, structurally defined citizenship consists of rights and duties. According to T. H. Marshall, ‘citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed’ (1949:87).

In intellectual discussions on the concept of citizenship the recurrent theme has always been the distinction between the political cum legal component and the social component. The former refers to the political cum legal standing of an individual in a particular country that entitles him, from the constitutional position, to an array of rights such as right to participate in the exercise of public power, political decision-making, right to life, to a fair hearing, etc.<sup>77</sup>. The latter refers to a person’s right to “share to the full in the

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<sup>77</sup>John Scott (1994:61) has argued that this cluster of civil-political rights and their corresponding obligations, “need not involve a system of full political ‘democracy’ ... but it does imply a certain degree of democracy among those who are accorded the status of citizenship. “It is, however, doubtful whether such right are granted in a military set up, for instance, where the constitution and its provision, especially those that on the basis or legitimacy of such regimes, are outrightly suspended.

social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being” (Marshall. 1945:74). According to Ifidon, the social conception of citizenship is “usually the product of history and culture ... an outgrowth from interpersonal relations” (1996: 1 02).

Intellectual comments on the definition of citizenship as outlined above in Nigeria, is rather curious. In a catchy essay, Femi Taiwo provides a critical insight on the nature of citizenship in Nigeria. According to Taiwo, the existence of the legal cum political conception of citizenship in Nigeria is uneasy. In his words, “beyond phrase-mongering, there are no citizens in Nigeria, only citizens of Nigeria ... That is, Nigerian citizenship is merely geographical, it is without a moral ideological content... part of what typifies citizenship, especially in the modern state, is the de-emphasizing of geography and other natural facts in its composition ... The freedom to locate anywhere within the boundaries of the relevant geopolity is non-existent in Nigeria” (1996:15-16).

It is to this end that the social conception, being an outgrowth of culture and history, becomes relevant in understanding the nature of citizenship in Nigeria. In fact, John Scott has provided a very apt theoretical division of citizenship in the light of both perspectives, into the first-order and second-order construct. The essence, argues Scott, is to transcend the limitation of the first-order construct which neglects the social conditions that establish the contradictory conventions and practices that define the boundaries of citizenship. According to Scott, the second order construct i.e. sociological conception helps us understand the idea of citizenship which is found preponderant in people’s mental awareness and acceptance. This conception identifies the idea of citizenship as a whole complex of institutions practices and conventions that are embodied in often contradictory ways, in the cultural and sub-cultural perspectives of a society and which informs its political and ideological struggles (1994:46).

As a product of history and culture, citizenship in Nigeria is social, involving contradictory patterns and conventions. The contradictions inherent in citizenship in Nigeria can be found validated in the terse but profound conclusion that while a Nigerian nationality is non-existent, properly speaking, citizenship is operative at the homeland level (Ifidon, 1996:103). In the same vein, Peter Ekeh had argued that “citizenship is still largely a group (primordial) phenomenon rather than an attribute of individual political actors” (1972:84).

## Contradictions in citizenship status and their conflictual tendencies in Nigeria

Put simply, the idea of political conflict in Nigeria's political system can be understood in the light of this contradictory pattern and problematic nature of citizenship. Empirically, national citizenship in Nigeria is far from being resolved, and the inability is due to the fact that various ethnic groups that compose the Nigerian nation-state<sup>78</sup> have conceived different attitudes to Nigerian citizenship. Such identity differences have heightened, to the point of political significance, the incidence and outbreak of conflicts in Nigeria.

We hinted at the view, in our theoretical construct on violence and conflict, that conflict resides, most prominently, in the struggle, of two or more individuals, groups, within a state whose objectives differ, over power, status, privileges and values, etc. The struggle over resources in the Niger Delta is the struggle to define their citizenship within the Nigerian nation-state. In Nigeria today, the success of an ethnic group, due to an illusory belief in the strength of geographical and numerical size, to hold onto power since independence has succeeded in generating a sense and feeling of alienation and marginalization on the part of other major ethnic groups. The existence of such an over-riding philosophy, with respect to control of oil and the rents accruing from it, has enabled the dominant, alienating group to define citizenship status as that of first class citizens and others to a set of under-class or second-class citizens within the same geographical boundary<sup>79</sup>. Over the years, each and successive governments and regimes are often defined in the sense of a dominant ruling group and subjected excluded groups. This consistent pattern in the nature of governance and rule and the inordinate, unbridled ambition to perpetually dominate others, coupled with the struggle to monopolize the resource-allocating elements of the state are the factors that account for the problems of citizenship, statehood and their' effects on the incidence of conflict in the Niger Delta. The utter denigration of the environment consequent on the exploration of oil leaves the oil-producing areas polluted with no prospect of livelihood. Air, water, the soil and the

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<sup>78</sup>There are two categories of nation-states: those where there are dominant (ethnic, racial, or religious) groups and those where there are not (Young, 1993:3-35). Clearly, the Nigerian case is the former. The bogus claim to dominance has been used for political advantage by a section of the country.

<sup>79</sup>This is referred to as the "principle of northern primacy." A classic instance is the following statement credited to Malam Maitama Sule that " ... Everyone has a gift from God. The Northerners are endowed by God with leadership qualities. The Yoruba man knows how to earn a living and has diplomatic qualities. The Igbo is gifted in commerce, trade and technological innovation." This is no doubt the material for the theology of domination.

vegetation are all enmeshed in the mess of pollution that leaves lives unbearable and a kind of agony and misery. It is treatment of inhabitants as slaves that provokes violence and conflict.

Citizenship, in Nigeria, is now defined as exclusion, not inclusion. Presently, political interaction entails a level of awareness and consciousness defined in one's identity. Citizenship entails an identity and such an identity can be defined in multiple terms. I may be defined as a member of a nation-state, a member of an ethnic group, as a member of a communal group within an ethnic group. In Nigeria's political history and development, the level of identity awareness and consciousness, spells a lot of the nature of political interaction and the attitude that is prevalent in our political order. The existence of the problem of national identity will, in turn, mean the existence of the politics of alienation. This is the precipitant to conflict in the Niger Delta. In short, the lingering conflict in the Niger Delta is the battle not only to resist the alienating tendencies of the Nigerian state but also, the battle to realize the rights and privileges of citizenship.

While in most cases the struggle in the Niger Delta is presented as one for the self-determination of an ethnic group, taken to dramatic heights by the Ogoni debacle, within the context of the structurally imbalanced Nigerian federation in which the majority ethnic groups control oil resources found in minority areas, the site of conflict has remained within the dialectics of oil production, distribution and access.

### **Categorical imperatives for peaceful co-existence**

From the foregoing, it has been established that the outbreak of environmental conflict is intricately tied to the existence of a disparate attitude or a more or less perforated sense of citizenship crises compounded by an increasing sense of alienation of groups, particularly minority groups, in the overall allocation and distribution of and access to the fruits of environmental resources. Where minority groups are alienated in an ethnically diverse community, especially where a majority group is in control of power, they find their citizenship status threatened. As such, this sense of relative deprivation has the full tendency of breaking into conflict, especially with the ethnic group in control of power. This is the case in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.

However, a resolution of this crises situation will have to take some categorical imperatives into consideration. In the first place, it is essential to note that the era of military rule in Nigeria has been historically injurious, in the sense that the apathetic attitude of the military has been a causal factor in the outbreak, continuance and consolidation of this trend of conflict. The

military has failed to respond favourably to the conflict because of its illegitimate standing. A legitimate government will never watch while its domain is exposed to increasing danger and state of lingering instability. To this end, therefore, it suffices one to contend most vehemently that the resolution of conflict in this region will have to go with full democratization of all aspects of social, political and economic life, with respect to this region.

Moreover, it is important to stress that a policy that promotes the safeguarding and reparation of human rights abuses should be set in place in order to redress some of the injustices that have been perpetrated in that region. In other words, there should be respect for human rights. This goes with a full guarantee of citizenship rights and status. Citizenship status is ensconced on three essential propositions: individual human rights, political participation and socio-economic welfare. The entrenchment of these basic constituents of citizenship will go a long way in resolving the dynamics of conflict already in place in this region.

Furthermore, Johan Galtung has defined peace as the condition in space for non-violent development (1996:223). In line with this, the Nigerian state should ensure that an appreciable level of development takes place in this region. This has the special quality of promoting the welfare of the people, thereby drawing a sense of belonging from them. Social and economic amenities should be adequately provided for.

Apart from the above, there should be respect for international laws on the environment. One of the very absurd ironies of the operation of multinational companies in the Niger Delta is the lack of respect for international laws. For instance, there are international environmental laws that state that:

*No state has the right to use or to permit the use of its territory in such a manner as to cause injury by furness in or to the territory of another or to the properties or persons therein, when the case is of serious consequence and the jury established by clear and convincing evidence*<sup>80</sup>

In furtherance of the dearth of this case, principles 21 and 22 of the 1972 Stockholm Declaration states that:

*States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources, pursuant to their own environmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that*

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<sup>80</sup>See the Report of the Trait Smelter Arbitration of 1931.



*activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other states, to areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction ...*

*States shall cooperate to develop further the international law regarding liability and compensation for victims of pollution and other environmental damages caused by activities within the jurisdiction or control of such states to areas beyond jurisdiction or control of such states to areas beyond their jurisdiction.*

Multinational oil companies operating in the Niger Delta, with Shell being the largest producer and extractor of oil should operate according to the laws regulating the environment. It is not misnomer to state that the same Shell operates according to laws in the extraction of resources in Europe, while neglecting to go by laws in most West Africa countries. It will be safer for all, if the Nigerian State with it economically can transact their business in the light of rules.

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## Le Ntobo chez les Ewondo: Etude de l'impact des logiques traditionnelles d'identification de la citoyenneté sur la convivialité ethnique au Cameroun

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### Abstract

*Les récents événements politiques au Cameroun, notamment les élections présidentielles de 1992 avaient vu l'émergence dans le discours du concept Ntobo dans la cohabitation entre les Ewondo, les Béti en général et les Bamiléké, les premiers qualifiant les derniers de Ntobo. Ntobo peut se traduire en trencsis par allochtone. Il désigne chez les anciens Ewondo toute personne qui quitte délibérément son village natal pour aller s'installer ailleurs. C'est donc par rapport à la terre, au territoire natal, bref à la patrie que les Ewondo conçoivent le Ntobo. En effet, la terre n'a pas qu'une importance économique, mais revêt toute une dimension spirituelle et religieuse significative. Dans une conception où le monde des vivants est en interaction permanente et nécessaire avec le monde des ancêtres défunts, ces derniers constituent une partie de la force vitale des Ewondo. Le village natal est leur sphère de compétence. S'éloigner donc de sa patrie, c'est se déposséder de cette force vitale, c'est se déposséder soi-même, c'est être zézé mod, fainéant, vaurien. La typologie du Ntobo que font les Ewondo présente trois principales catégories: le Ntobo mininga, allochtone à cause de la femme; le Ntoboésie, allochtone à cause du travail; Ntobo ongola, allochtone à cause de la ville. La question que cet article se fixe pour objectif de repointer est la suivante: pourquoi ce mode traditionnel d'identification de la citoyenneté chez les Ewondo est-il reproduit avec tant d'acuité et de conséquences en milieu urbain, cadre supposé de modernité et surtout d'hétérogénéité ethnique et culturelle? Nous avons posé deux hypothèses complémentaires. Le premier est que la ville en Afrique et au Cameroun n'est pas toujours, et de manière unilatérale, le cadre de la modernité. C'est aussi le cadre de reproduction des cultures traditionnelles des groupes sociaux qui s'y retrouvent. De même cette ville est implantée chez des populations dites autochtones qui l'entendent à la fois comme leur ville et naturellement comme leur village. Ceci crée un conflit permanent entre les logiques de fonctionnement traditionnelles du village et les logiques de fonctionnement modernes véhiculées par la ville. La deuxième hypothèse qui vient compléter la première en expliquant pourquoi le phénomène du Ntobo a connu autant d'acuité et de conséquences néfastes dans la socialité et la convivialité ethnique est que, le pouvoir politique, conscient de ce conflit, l'a*

*récupéré, au lieu de le juguler, à ses propres fins, notamment la conservation du pouvoir en portant le débat sur la place publique, et en faisant inscrire dans la loi fondamentale, les expressions comme minorités ethniques, autochtones.*

## **Introduction**

Le monde entier est aujourd'hui le théâtre de nombreux conflits ethniques. La situation actuelle au Kosovo, les troubles à caractère ethnique récents de l'Etat du Delta au Nigeria, les massacres du Rwanda, qualifiés à raison de génocide Rwandais en sont des illustrations concrètes. Il serait intéressant, pour pouvoir comprendre et juguler ces conflits, de se situer au cœur de la cohabitation inter-ethnique pour analyser les clichés et les stéréotypes mutuels que chaque ethnie utilise pour designer l'autre ethnie. C'est dans cette perspective que le présent article se focalise sur le concept de Ntobo. Il a pour objectif de comprendre ce qu'est le Ntobo chez les Ewondo et d'en faire la typologie. En tant que concept renvoyant aux structures traditionnelles, notamment l'identification traditionnelle de la citoyenneté chez les Ewondo, la question à laquelle voudrait répondre cet article est la suivante: Pourquoi ce mode traditionnel d'identification de la citoyenneté chez les Ewondo est-il reproduit avec tant d'acuité et de conséquences en milieu urbain, cadre supposé de modernité et surtout d'hétérogénéité ethnique et culturelle?

Nous avons posé, en rapport à ces problèmes, deux hypothèses complémentaires. La première est que la ville en Afrique et au Cameroun n'est pas toujours, et de manière unilatérale, le cadre de la modernité. C'est aussi le cadre de reproduction des cultures traditionnelles des groupes sociaux qui s'y retrouvent. De même cette ville est implantée chez des populations dites autochtones qui l'entendent à la fois comme une ville et naturellement comme leur village. Ceci crée un conflit permanent entre les logiques de fonctionnement traditionnelles du village et les logiques de fonctionnement modernes véhiculées par la ville.

La deuxième hypothèse qui vient compléter la première en essayant d'expliquer pourquoi le phénomène du Ntobo a connu autant d'acuité et de conséquences néfastes dans la socialité et la convivialité ethnique au Cameroun est que le pouvoir politique, conscient de ce conflit, la récupère, au lieu de le juguler, à ses propres fins, notamment la conservation du pouvoir en portant le débat sur la place publique, et en faisant inscrire dans la loi fondamentale, les expressions comme minorités ethniques, autochtones.

Notre réflexion se situe au cœur du débat très actuel sur l'ethnicité. Trois grandes orientations théoriques existent sur ce thème. L'approche primordialité soutient que le tribalisme et les problèmes ethniques sont des

éléments congénitaux. De ce point de vue l'émergence des conflits tribaux et ethniques de par le monde n'est que la résurgence de cette irrationalité comportementale inscrite en chaque ethnie.

L'approche constructiviste qui est une critique de cette approche primordialité atteste, quant à elle, que la conscience ethnique est une création idéologique, de même que la création de l'ethnie elle-même. De ce point de vue, les conflits ethniques et tribaux sont le fait de la manipulation des gens ordinaires par les élites. Même si l'approche née- ou post-constructiviste vient la nuancer en estimant que la manipulation politique de l'ethnicité ne saurait expliquer à elle seule les conflits ethniques surtout en Afrique, c'est néanmoins à cette autre orientation théorique que souscrit notre problèmes et nos hypothèses de travail.

Ce travail fait également apparaître l'important débat actuel qui existe sur l'urbanité. Pendant longtemps, la ville a été conçue en Afrique comme le cadre par excellence de la modernité occidentale. Mais l'approche actuelle de l'urbanité atteste la réinvention et la reproduction des structures de fonctionnement traditionnel, créant ainsi une ambivalence existentielle dans les villes Africaines.

Sur le plan méthodologique, nous avons interviewé par la méthode de choix raisonne trente (30) Ewondo dans les zones urbaines notamment les quartiers Ngoa-Ekelle, Nsam, Olezoa, MvogMbi, et dans les zones péri-urbaines notamment les quartiers Ahala, le village Etoa. Le choix de ces quartiers s'explique par le fait que nous y avons des possibilités et des facilités de discuter librement avec des personnes qui nous sont très rapprochées du point de vue parents. Ceci était très important pour nous compte tenu du caractère délicat et sensible des questions portant sur l'ethnicité. En ce qui est des informateurs proprement dits, le premier critère de choix était d'être Ewondo. Le deuxième était d'être une personne ressource, c'est-à-dire celle qui disposait des informations qui nous intéressaient. C'est donc par rapport à cela que tous nos informateurs étaient des personnes âgées de plus trente (30) ans. Sur ces 30 informateurs, 10 étaient de sexe féminin, et 20 de sexe masculin. Avant d'entrer dans le vif de notre sujet, disons un mot bref sur les Ewondo.

## **Des Ewondo**

### **a) Localisation**

Les Ewondo occupent les départements du Mfoundi et de la Mefou Akono, dans la province du Centre. Ils se retrouvent aussi dans le département

de l'Océan, province du Sud<sup>81</sup>. C'est surtout en tant qu'ils sont les occupants autochtones du siège des Institutions Camerounaises que ce groupe nous intéresse. En tant qu'occupants de Yaoundé, capitale du Cameroun, ils sont contraints à la cohabitation avec les autres groupes ethniques. Par ailleurs, réputés être les vendeurs de terrain par excellence, cette cohabitation s'étend dans les autres petites villes comme Mfou, Mbankomo, Ngoumou, Akono ... et même les villages. Il n'est donc pas souvent difficile d'entendre dire que les Ewondo ont vendu tout leur terrain aux Bamiléké. Ce dernier groupe semble le client le plus important des Ewondo sur les problèmes de terrain. Sa population est estimée à environ 97.290 âmes. Ils sont limitrophes dans la province du Centre d'avec les Eton, les Bassa, les Bene, les Mvele, les MbidaMbani. Au sud, ils sont limitrophes d'avec les Bene, les pygmées Bakola, les Mvae, les Boulou et les Ntumu.

### **b) Origine**

Les Européens les désignèrent communément du nom de Yaoundé; mais, ils se nomment eux-mêmes, Ewondo. L'étymologie de ce mot n'est pas encore la chose la mieux partagée. Certaines traditions le dérivent d'Ewundu qui serait l'ancêtre de la population; d'autres auteurs estiment que ce nom signifierait arachides. Leur nom serait de ce point de vue un sobriquet parce qu'ils disaient être aussi nombreux que les arachides. Ils seraient issus de l'union d'un Betsinga et d'une Mangissa. Ce qui est sûr, c'est qu'ils viennent du Nord et que leurs aïeux furent les Mangissa, Eton et les Mvele. Ils occupent d'abord le site de Yaoundé, puis leurs migrations divergèrent légèrement en direction du Nyong dans trois itinéraires:

Yaounde-Nkonq-Abok-Nlonq, voie longeant vers les Bassa empruntée par les MvogNama, Les Mvog-Fuda-Mballa

Yaoundé-Oveng-Ngoumou-Akono-Olama, itinéraire central suivi par les Mvog Tsoungui Mballa, les Mvog Atangana Mballa. Nkong-ndougou-Akono-Zoalouma-Nagali

Autour des grands clans Ewondo: mvog Fuda Mballa: 10.500 personnes, mvog Tsoungui Mballa: 16.100, mvog Atangana Mballa: 9.500, mvog Nama: 4.200, mvog esom ndana 2500, gravitent de petits groupes beloa d'origine Sanaga, Fang ou Maka: ce sont les Kombe, Esom, Osa, Yanda, Etudi. Comme ailleurs, les beloa Ewondo sont placés sur les frontières: Kombe et Yanda face

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<sup>81</sup> En general, l'imaginaire populaire classe aussi les Mvele du département de la Mefou et Afamba, les Bene des départements du Mfoundi du Nyong et So'o, province du Centre parmi les Ewondo. Même si aucune différence n'existe entre eux et les Ewondo tant sur le plan du langage et de l'organisation socio-politico-économique. Ils ne sont pas des Ewondo.



aux Etenga, Etudi face aux Enoa, Yanda face aux Bene, Etudi face aux Bassa. Même si ces groupes sont aujourd'hui considérés comme les Ewondo, il n'en demeure pas moins vrai qu'ils ont été au départ leurs Beloa, esclaves, et partant des MiNtobo (sing. Ntobo) allochtones. C'est dire donc que le problème du Ntobo que nous explorons ici, n'est pas nouveau, même s'il ne se pose pas de la même façon aujourd'hui. Certes, un Ntobo n'est pas nécessairement un Oloa, mais de toute évidence un Oloa est un Ntobo. Nous y reviendrons en parlant de la typologie des Ntobo.

### **c) Organisation politique**

Les Ewondo vivent en milieu forestier. Toutes les sociétés qui vivent dans cet espace écologique sont dites sociétés acéphales. Ce mot, sur le plan étymologique signifie qui n'a pas de tête, donc qui n'a pas de chef. Une telle société serait donc une société qui ignore toute forme d'organisation politique. Voir le problème sous cet angle, c'est ignorer qu'aucune société au monde ne fonctionne comme une horde; toutes les sociétés ont leur forme spécifique d'organisation. De ce point de vue, il faut comprendre par sociétés acéphales, à la suite de P. Clastres, dans la Société contre l'Etat, non pas une société qui ignore une quelconque organisation politique mais plutôt une société qui ignore et combat même toute forme centralisée du pouvoir. En général, l'organisation politique ici est dualiste. D'un cote, on a les chefs de villages, dont l'institution est solidaire de la colonisation; ils sont de ce fait les courroies de transmission du pouvoir central au niveau des villages. De ce fait, ils vendent les impôts, transmettent les informations des autorités légales auprès de leurs administrés et surtout règlent les différends. D'institution récente et surtout du fait que les populations ne lui reconnaissent pas souvent l'autorité qu'il exerce sur elles, ces chefs ne sont pas toujours les personnes les plus respectées. Il est donc courant d'y voir des discussions, des engueulades et des bagarres ouvertes avec les chefs de village. Pourtant les chefs de famille sont plus respectés ici.

Ce type de Chef que J. C. Barbier nomme Capita est l'institution politique par excellence dans les sociétés dites acéphales, en général, et chez les Pahouins, en particulier. Il régie toute sorte de conflit à caractère social, il effectue des rites de toutes sortes. Son autorité lui est ouvertement reconnue, et les populations font souvent un lien entre l'autorité qu'il exerce et qu'elles lui reconnaissent et la possession de certains pouvoirs mystiques que lui ont légués les ancêtres lors de l'initiation antérieure à son intronisation. Compte tenu de cette légitimité, ils entourent le plus souvent les chefs de villages comme notables dans l'exercice de leur pouvoir. Dans l'un et l'autre cas cependant, l'autorité d'un chef, fut-il le chef de village, ne doit pas fouler au

piéd l'honneur, l'estime personnelle et la dignité des populations. En effet, il est courant d'entendre chez les Ewondo, les paroles du genre: je n'ai pas d'ordre à recevoir de toi, je ne mange pas chez toi. Par là on comprend que la capacité de pouvoir se nourrir, signe d'une indépendance économique est gage de liberté et atteste l'indépendance vis-à-vis de qui que ce soit. De ce point de vue, même le plus respecté et le plus craint des chefs peut voir son respect s'effriter s'il venait à se méprendre sur ces préceptes. C'est certainement aussi pour cela que l'on dit de ce type de sociétés qu'elles sont des sociétés égalitaires<sup>82</sup>.

#### **d) Organisation sociale**

Les sociétés de la forêt en général et les Ewondo qui nous préoccupent en particulier, sont des sociétés lignagères. Dans un tel system, même si les variantes dialectales de leur langue commune permettent de distinguer les différentes tribus entre elles, le clan ou le lignage sont des critères de reconnaissance et d'identification des individus à l'intérieur d'une même tribu. Ainsi, à l'intérieur de chaque tribu, on posera à quelqu'un, pour essayer de le définir, la question suivante: Esoa ane dzoe ya? Qui signifie littéralement ton Père s'appeler comment? Pour dire comment s'appelle ton père ?, puis ton grand-père et si possible ton arrière-grand-père? Ceux qui sont plus directs posent la question suivante: One man dze?, littéralement, tu es fils de qui?, c'est-à-dire, tu es descendant de quel groupe? D'autres encore peuvent demander One ayon afe? Qui signifie de quel clan ou lignage es-tu? Toutes ces questions sont identiques, elles cherchent à découvrir l'ayons de l'interlocuteur. L'ayons est donc le cadre de référence sociale par excellence chez les Pahouins. Il désigne un groupe d'hommes revendiquant une parente ou un ancêtre communs, même s'il n'est pas toujours possible de préciser de manière tangible leurs liens généalogiques.

#### **e) Organisation économique**

L'ethnie pahouine au sein de laquelle se trouve la sous-ethnie Ewondo, est essentiellement faite d'agriculteurs. Deux principaux types d'agriculture y sont pratiqués: l'agriculture vivrière et l'agriculture de rente.

### **1. Les cultures vivrières**

En ce qui est de la culture vivrière, dans le grand sud forestier où se trouve localisée l'ethnie pahouine, le climat équatorial et la faible densité

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<sup>82</sup> Certes l'égalitarisme a surtout une connotation économique, où, du fait de l'existence de nombreux mécanismes égalisateurs, il est assez difficile aux populations de faire de l'épargne. Nous y reviendrons en parlant de l'organisation économique.

démographique font prédominer la culture des tubercules et la banane plantain, avec des nuances régionales. Certaines cultures ont localement une importance particulière: arachides, cannes à sucre, manioc chez les Ewondo.

## **2. Les cultures de rente**

En ce qui est des cultures de rente, les populations cultivent surtout le cacao et le café. L'abondance du gibier et les nombreuses cultures qu'on y pratique garantissent une ration alimentaire presque équilibrée. De nos jours, l'exploitation forestière est aussi un important facteur de développement. De nombreuses scieries sont créées et par conséquent, de nombreux emplois. De même, grâce à cette exploitation, on note de plus en plus un développement infrastructurel pousse: construction des écoles, des routes, installation des puits.

Par ailleurs, ces sociétés, du fait de très nombreuses pressions qui y existent annulent le plus souvent toute possibilité d'épargne. Les contraintes de la famille, la parenté et bien d'autres pratiques sont autant de mécanismes égalisateurs qui annulent les possibilités d'accumulation. C'est peut-être pourquoi dans cette société la tendance à l'accumulation n'est pas très forte. Certes, des initiatives à caractère économique apparaissent de plus en plus dans cet univers culturel, mais, celles-ci ont toujours pour de primordial ce nivellement par le bas. Que penser de la religion ou plus globalement de la culture spirituelle de ce groupe?

### **f) Culture spirituelle des Ewondo**

Nous avons déjà mentionné évasivement plus haut que les Ewondo ont été très rapidement convertis à la religion chrétienne. Mais, bien avant cette conversion, ils avaient leurs cultes. Certaines formes anciennes de ces cultes religieux parfois resurgissent dans la pratique religieuse actuelle. Les anciens Ewondo, en effet, croyaient en un Dieu unique, créateur, omnipotent et omniscient qu'ils appelaient, termes que la pratique religieuse chrétienne actuelle a bien conservée, Ntondobe celui qui soutient le globe terrestre, Zamba elo teqe, Dieu, siège de la sagesse, Zamba esia ngul mese, Dieu, le Père tout Puissant, Zamba Nkom Bod, Dieu, le Créateur des hommes. Cette convergence dans la croyance en un Dieu unique explique peut-être à certains degrés, de l'avis de P. Laburthe-Tolra, la rapide conversion des Pahouins, principalement des Béti qu'il a étudiés, au Christianisme. Mais, au-delà de ce Dieu unique, les anciens Ewondo croyaient que les ancêtres défunts jouaient le rôle d'intermédiaires entre Dieu et les hommes. Ils appelaient ces intermédiaires, les *minkug*. C'est dans ce contexte, par exemple qu'on y effectue des cultes sur les tombes des parents défunts. Il est, par exemple, cru

ici qu'un parent qui meurt mécontent de son enfant ou après l'avoir maudit, mérite un culte pour voir sa colère apaisée et pour que le dit enfant puisse prospérer. Ce culte participe de la philosophie générale d'après laquelle selon Birago Diop en Afrique, les morts ne sont pas morts. C'est pour cela qu'il est courant de voir des clans, des lignages, des familles, invoquer en cas de manifestation importante l'esprit de leurs ancêtres défunts pour les assister tout au long de la cérémonie. La cosmologie pahouine présente le monde sous trois instances en nécessaire interaction: le monde macrocosmique, monde de Dieu; le monde mesocosmique, le monde des vivants; et enfin le monde microcosmique, qui est le monde des esprits des ancêtres défunts,

De nombreuses pratiques mystiques sont inscrites dans les représentations des populations. Il est important de signaler qu'ici le phénomène de la sorcellerie est très répandu. Il désigne la croyance d'après laquelle certaines personnes possèdent certains pouvoirs mystiques qu'ils utilisent pour nuire aux autres et empêcher leur développement. Dans ce contexte, la mort chez les Pahouins est souvent très associée aux pratiques de sorcellerie. De nombreux scientifiques aujourd'hui, lient l'existence qualifiée d'ailleurs d'imaginaire de cette pratique à l'archaïsme des sociétés où ce genre de croyances a cours, et qu'elle disparaîtrait avec le phénomène de la modernité, Mais, de plus en plus, on se rend compte que ce phénomène se reproduit et se réinvente aussi bien en milieu urbain qu'en milieu rural. Cependant dans de nombreuses groupes Ewondo, comme dans les autres sociétés forestières, l'expertise des sorciers est de plus en plus utilisée pour lutter et combattre d'autres sorciers. Parfois même, cette seule expertise suffit souvent à condamner des supposés sorciers (P. Geschiere & C.Fisiy:1993). D'autres pratiques ont aussi une grande envergure chez les Ewondo. C'est par exemple le paganisme. C'est une pratique d'après laquelle des hommes se dédoubleraient en animaux pour nuire aux autres. Ainsi, *akun*, le hibou, *nyoe*, le serpent, *Ze*, la panthère ... ont des représentations très négatives dans cette société. Ce phénomène de transformation des hommes en animaux a été analysé par M. Hebga. Récemment encore une forme de sorcellerie, certainement empruntée de la région côtière du Cameroun, a fait irruption dans cette société; il s'agit du *kong* (le même phénomène s'appelle *ekong* dans le Sud-Ouest). Il s'agit d'une pratique d'après laquelle des parents causeraient la mort d'autres parents pour après les utiliser comme esclaves dans l'autre monde.

## **Limitation Et Contexte De L'article**

Les relations entre Béti et Bamiléké en général ont favorisé l'émergence des exclusions diverses. En effet, depuis les années 1990 et les crises qui ont

été conséquentes, les Bamiléké ont reçu des sommations diverses leur intimant l'ordre de rentrer dans leur province d'origine. Ces requêtes autoritaires et violentes d'exclusion ethnique ont atteint l'apothéose pendant les élections législatives et présidentielles de Mars et d'Octobre 1992. A Yaoundé par exemple, les Bamiléké des quartiers périphériques (Emana, Etoudi, Madagascar, Efoulan, Oyomabang, BiyemAssi...) avaient été sévèrement inquiétés: boutiques et maisons saccagées et brûlées. Ce phénomène n'était pas limité à Yaoundé; il s'était étendu aux villes voisines comme Mbalmayo, Sangmélina, Akonolinga (Tribus sans Frontières, Rapport n02 1993). Dans le contexte actuel à Yaoundé et dans les autres régions et villes Bété, parler de Ntobo c'est renvoyer d'abord et avant tout aux Bamiléké. Le contexte général est que depuis les dernières années au Sud Cameroun, les débats politiques sont de plus en plus marqués par une opposition entre l'Ouest (Bamiléké, Grassfields) et le Centre-Sud (Bété) comme l'attestent Geschiere & Konings (1993: 10)<sup>83</sup>.

Ces tensions entre ces deux régions sont exacerbées par le fait que progressivement les Bamiléké ont occupé l'espace foncier à Yaoundé à telle enseigne que des familles et même des clans entiers installés en zone urbaine sont aujourd'hui menacés de disparition notamment les MvogAda, les MvogAtemengue, les Ndong, les Emveng ... Ces revendications et ces exclusions sont exacerbées par la protection de la propriété foncière et de la survie sociale de certains groupes comme nous venons de le dire, mais aussi par la protection du pouvoir politique. En effet, la présence de plus en plus massive des Bamiléké à Yaoundé constituerait une véritable menace pour le pouvoir détenu par les Bété. Voilà décrit le climat au sein duquel le concept de Ntobo apparaît. Mais, au départ, que signifie-t-il sur le plan traditionnel, quelle est la valeur du Ntobo, combien de catégories de Ntobo existe-t-il, quelles différences y va-t-il entre le terme Ntobo et les termes voisins comme Oloa, esclave, Betobolobo, non-ewondo (non-Bété en général), Nnen, étranger.

## Définition Du Ntobo

### a) Approche ethnolinguistique du Ntobo

Le substantif Ntobo (MiNtobo, pi) est dérivé du verbe Atobo qui signifie 1) s'asseoir, 2) s'installer, 3) se fixer. Le verbe s'asseoir implique l'idée d'etoo (bitoo) siège. Ainsi:

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<sup>83</sup> Je suis redevable pour ces informations à Mr Antoine Socpa, candidat au PhD à l'Université de Leiden, aux Pays Bas, dans son projet de thèse portant sur Multi-party Politics and Ethnicity in Cameroon: A Comparaison of different Regional Trajectories.

*/Me toa etoa/*

litter:/moi//s'asseoir/+mv// chaise ou bane, fauteuil/.

Je suis assis sur la chaise, le bane ou le fauteuil.

Le substantif etoa implique également l'idée de poste que l'on occupe. Ainsi, on peut toujours utiliser l'expression, me toa etoa, mais l'expression la plus utilisée c'est abi etoa. Le verbe abi signifie 1) avoir, 2) posséder, 3) tenir, 4) arrêter. Ainsi on pourrait dire

*/me bele etoa/*

litter:/moi//avoir ou posséder ou tenir ou arrêter//poste

J'ai un poste.

Mais, il existe une petite différence entre abi etoa et atobo etoa. Ce dernier montre seulement qu'on a un poste par exemple un poste de travail, mais c'est le verbe abi etoa qui vient montrer la possibilité de ne plus avoir le poste si on ne le tient pas bien, si on ne le conserve pas bien.

Ce verbe implique enfin le lieu d'habitation ou de résidence.

*/me toa a ongola/*

litter:/moi//habiter/+mv//a/Yaoundé/

J'habite Yaoundé.

Le substantif etoa signifie donc 1) siège, 2) place, 3) poste 4) habitation

Mais, chez les Ewondo et les Bété en général, lorsqu'à un verbe quelconque, ont enlevé la première lettre pour mettre le son n et créer un nouveau substantif, c'est donner une connotation péjorative à la chose qu'on qualifie, comme pour signifier passer le temps à, faire l'accessoire en oubliant l'essentiel. Ainsi, on aura par exemple:

1) *ndin bininga*, de *adin* aimer, qui signifie, celui qui passe le temps à allier avec les femmes, 2) *ndi bidi*, de *adi*, manger, qui passe le temps à manger, 3)

*Nnyu menyok*, de *anyu*, boire, qui passe le temps à boire le vin, un sou lard, etc... Pour attester davantage de l'aspect péjoratif de ces substantifs, les Ewondo ajoutent souvent une expression qui exprime la petitesse, le manque de valeur ou tout au moins, le peu de valeur, preuve de la fainéantise, de la bêtise et de l'état de vaurien. On dira ainsi:

1) *e man ndin bininga nyo*, espèce de coureur de femmes, 2) *e man ndi bidi nyo*, espèce de mangeur de nourriture, 3) *e man nnyu menyok nyo*, espèce de souldard ...

C'est également dans ce registre que souscrit le substantif Ntobo. Il a donc une connotation péjorative et désigne celui qui abandonne son propre village natal pour se fixer ailleurs pour une raison ou pour une autre. C'est dire que quel que noble et importante que soit la cause de la migration, être Ntobo dans l'univers culturel des Ewondo, à partir de cette analyse ethnolinguistique revêt une dimension négative. Mais, combien de catégories de Ntobo existe-t-il chez les Ewondo? Existe-t-il des différences entre ces catégories?

### **b) Typologie du Ntobo**

A partir de ce qui précède, nous nous rendons compte que, pour aucune raison, l'esprit Ewondo ne tolère l'abandon du village natal. Nous reviendrons plus tard sur l'importance du domicile, du chez soi chez les Ewondo et les Bété en général. C'est par rapport à cela que les Ewondo distinguent trois types de Ntobo.

- le Ntobo mininga, allochtone à cause d'une femme. Certains hommes vont souvent se fixer chez des femmes dans des villages. Ce type de séjour en soi n'est pas négatif, mais est plutôt la preuve que la fille concernée est assez attirante. Mais, lorsque ce séjour dépasse un certain seuil, l'étranger est taxé de Ntobo, indépendamment de son âge, de son statut professionnel. Certes, le poids de la marginalisation tient aussi compte de ce statut professionnel. Quand il s'agit d'un Ntobo exerçant une activité rémunératrice, il est traité avec bien des égards parce qu'il a une certaine rentabilité. Mais, dès qu'il s'agit d'un sans-emploi, il perd toute valeur, et deviendra l'homme à tout faire de sa belle-famille. De plus en plus aujourd'hui, les filles dans certains villages les appellent des vivants, ce qui signifie celui-là que j'ai remmené vivant comme dans une partie de pêche ou de chasse. Ce type de phénomène est très lié à un autre appelé tobo assi qu'on rencontre beaucoup dans les provinces de l'Est, du Centre et du Sud. Il consiste à dompter, par des mécanismes qui sentent souvent crus être mystiques, un partenaire donne. Mais dans l'imagerie populaire, il s'agit surtout des femmes qui apprivoisent des hommes.



Beaucoup de MiNtobo mi bininga sont crus être victimes de cette pratique de tobo assi sur laquelle pourrait se focaliser une étude socio-anthropologique.

- Le Ntobo esie, allochtone à cause du travail. Beaucoup de personnes en quête de travail vent souvent se fixer dans certaines régions pour besoin de travail. Cela les pousse souvent à abandonner leur village d'origine. De nombreuses populations des provinces du Centre, Sud et de l'Est, en quête de travail, se sont installées dans les provinces du Littoral et du Sud-ouest pendant le période colonial. C'est cette catégorie que les Ewondo appellent Ntobo esie. Mais, il peut aussi s'agir des cas où le travailleur a passé beaucoup de temps dans son lieu de service et ne repart au village que pendant la retraite. Ce type est aussi qualifié de Ntobo, surtout si ce dernier ne s'est même pas construit dans son village comme c'est souvent le cas.

- Enfin le Ntobo angola, allochtone à cause de la ville. Beaucoup de personnes, surtout des jeunes, vent souvent se fixer en ville sans une occupation quelconque abandonnant ainsi leurs villages. De nombreuses raisons sont souvent avancées pour expliquer de tels exodes ruraux, mais, l'esprit Ewondo qualifie ce genre de personnes de Ntobo ongolo. Les barrières qui distinguent chaque catégorie ne sent pas rigides. Dans l'un et l'autre cas, le statut de Ntobo favorise des mises à l'écart, des moqueries, brêf des marginalisations. Nous y reviendrons en parlant du statut et de la valeur du Ntobo.

En général dans l'un et l'autre de ces cas, le mot qui suit Ntobo est toujours le motif de cet état. Il est donc possible compte tenu de cela d'élargir l'horizon typologique des MiNtobo selon ce que le locuteur voudrait exprimer. De manière générale, les trois cas de figure dent nous avons fait état plus haut sent ceux qui apparaissent régulièrement dans le discours quotidien chez les Ewondo.

## **Distinction Du Ntobo D'avec Les Termes Voisins**

### **a) Oloa, client**

Le terme *Oloa*, *pl. beloa* signifie esclave ou plutôt client, le terme esclave étant plus ou moins connu dans l'univers culturel des Ewondo. Les Beloa dessinaient à l'époque où on les rencontrait les prisonniers de guerre. En effet, la société Ewondo comme les Béti en général, était une société guerrière. Les Beloa étaient donc le plus souvent issus de ces confrontations avec les autres groupes. De nombreuses souches Ewondo et Béti en général sent des Beloa. Il s'agit, nous l'avons d'ailleurs rappelé en parlant des Ewondo plus haut de petits groupes beloa d'origine *Sanaga*, *Fang* ou *Maka*: ce sont les *Kombe*, *Esom*, *Osa*, *Yanda*, *Etudi*. Comme ailleurs, les Beloa Ewondo sont places sur les

frontières: Kombe et Yanda face aux Etenga, Etudi face aux Enoa, Yanda face aux Bene, Etudi face aux Bassa.

Le *Ntobo* est différent de *l'oloa* dans la mesure où l'installation de *l'oloa* n'est pas une émanation de sa liberté personnelle, mais résulte du fait qu'il (j'entends son clan ou sa tribu) a été vaincu. De même, son lieu de fixation n'émane pas de sa décision et de son choix propres. Nous avons dit plus haut que les Ewondo installaient ces *Belo* le long des frontières comme boucliers centre d'éventuelles attaques des autres groupes voisins. Même sur le plan du statut, *l'Oloa* a un statut plus élevé que le *Ntobo*, parce que l'exode de *l'oloa* est un exode massif. Ce type de phénomène se produisait le plus souvent en temps de guerre et de conflit, il s'agissait donc là d'une population importante. Ceci explique certainement aussi pourquoi certaines tribus différentes des Ewondo sont devenues aujourd'hui des Ewondo. Qu'en est-il du *Nnen*?

### **b) Nnen, étranger**

*Nnen* (pl.*Beyen*) chez les Ewondo signifie étranger. En clair, le *Ntobo*, de même que toutes ces notions voisines se retrouvent dans l'appellation *Nnen*. *Nnen* peut donc aussi exprimer l'idée de *Ntobo*, allochtone. Mais, la différence que le *Nnen* a avec tous ces termes voisins est que le *Nnen* ne s'établit jamais longtemps dans un territoire, son séjour est ponctuel. Certes, s'il dépasse les seuils de cette durée, il rentre dans la catégorie des *MiNtobo*. Il est d'ailleurs important de signaler que d'après les conjonctures contextuelles, on peut aisément passer du *Nnen*, de *l'oloa*, de *Belobolobo* au *Ntobo*. Par ailleurs, le *Nnen* peut désigner tout individu non membre de la famille, du lignage, du clan, de la tribu tout dépendant de la sphère où on se situe. Que dire du *Belobolobo*?

### **c) Belobolobo, <balbutieur>**

*Belobolobo* chez les Ewondo désigne celui qui n'arrive pas à s'exprimer dans la langue Ewondo. Il n'y a souvent un parallèle presque évident entre *Ntobo*, *Nnen* et *Belobolobo*. En effet, le fait de balbutier en Ewondo trahit le caractère étranger de l'interlocuteur. De ce point de vue, même un Ewondo qui ne sait pas ou plus s'exprimer dans cette langue peut être aussi considéré comme un *Belobolobo* même si ce n'est pas au même degré qu'un non-Ewondo (non-Béti en général) à proprement parler. De même, un étranger qui s'exprime bien dans cette langue, tout au moins, ne devrait pas être considéré comme un *Belobolobo*. Mais, de manière générale dans le contexte actuel, *Belobolobo* désigne aussi bien un étranger qu'un allochtone.

Mais, à la différence de ces termes, le *Ntobo* renvoie à un individu qui est *Nnen*, étranger, *Belobotobo*, <balbutieur> s'étant fixé définitivement d'une

manière ou d'une autre dans un territoire n'appartenant ni à ses parents, ni à lui-même.

## Statut et Valeur du Ntobo

Nous avons déjà évoqué plus haut le fait que *l'Oloa* occupait une place importante dans la stratégie militaire des Ewondo. Le *Ntobo* aussi occupait une place de choix, surtout dans le domaine de la reproduction. De manière générale, celui-ci, notamment le Ntobomininga favorisait la procréation et la multiplication de la famille, du lignage et du clan en général. Dans la mesure où l'enfant était la richesse la plus importante de l'homme chez les Ewondo et les Béti en général selon le proverbe Ewondo: *Owog na akuma hebod*, il n'y a de richesse que d'hommes, le Ntobo qui favorisait cette procréation avait une utilité non négligeable. Dans certains cas, des polygynes recouraient aux *MiNtobo* pour multiplier leur progéniture. Même si leur utilité est reconnue et établie, il n'en demeure pas moins vrai que le *Ntobo* est l'objet de dénigrèrent, il est la risée des populations autochtones. C'est dans ce sens que nous pouvons dire que le *Ntobo* chez les anciens Ewondo est l'objet d'une exclusion sociale, il est donc un déviant social. Mais qu'est-ce qui explique la contradiction entre l'utilité du *Ntobo* et sa sous-valorisation dans l'univers mental des Ewondo? Pour le savoir, il serait intéressant de jeter un regard sur les notions de propriété, d'héritage, brèf du chez-soi chez les Ewondo.

## Le Chez-Soi, Garant De Noblesse Et De Dignité Chez Les Ewondo

Il n'est pas peu courant d'entendre chez les Ewondo des questions comme: Est-ce que je vis chez toi, est-ce que je mange chez toi, je suis chez moi, ne peux-tu pas allier chez toi? Ce type de questionnement dévoile, somme toute, ce que les Ewondo pensent de la propriété et surtout du statut élevé que cette propriété implique. En effet, être chez soi, c'est faire fructifier, faire prospérer la famille, c'est perpétuer la lignée, c'est manifester et exprimer l'éternité de la vie. Le gros des rites Ewondo sous-tendent ce type de croyance. Par ailleurs, il existe une communion interactionnelle nécessaire entre les vivants et les morts que l'absence d'une composante aboutirait à un manque de prospérité, à la tombée en ruine. Cela est symbolisé, par exemple, par le rite essai, lors du rite funèbre dont nous avons parlé en traitant de la religion et de la culture spirituelle des Ewondo. En effet, la mort d'un Ewondo est célébré comme la victoire de la vie sur la mort, dans la mesure où il est présents les successeurs et l'héritier du défunt qui vent perpétuer et immortaliser ses œuvres. Ce processus d'immortalisation n'est possible que lorsque la

communauté établie entre les vivants et les morts est respectée. Au-delà des difficultés et autres obstacles, la décision de rester chez soi est signe de prospérité et de sagesse chez les Ewondo. Celle anecdote qu'un de nos informateurs nous a rapportée est très révélatrice.

*A la suite des pièces d'un homme, son terre teste administrer ses biens se mit à vendre les enfants de ce dernier au Kong. De nombreux décès furent occasionnés et des tenues de palabre (esie) initiées. Au terme de celles-ci, il fut démentie à tour de rôle aux enfants ce qu'ils envisagent de faire des lors qu'ils sont épeires à mourir. Successivement les enfants déclarèrent abandonner le village (elig) de leur pete pour aller s'installer chez leur mère. Le dernier, à contraire de tous les autres, accepta de s'installer dans le village de son père sous les ovations et les acclamations de toute l'assistance. Et c'est ce dernier qui reçut tous les rites de bénédiction et prospérité.*

Par rapport à cela, on peut aisément conclure que la notion de chez-soi est très importante chez les Ewondo parce garante à la fois d'identité, de responsabilité et d'estime. Mais, pourquoi ces logiques d'identification du Ntobo qui renvoient, sans nul dou, aux logiques de fonctionnement traditionnel de la société Ewondo, sont-ils reproduites en milieu urbain, cadre suppose de modernité et donc d'hétérogénéité ethnique et culturelle?

### **Entre Modernité Et Tradition: La Ville, Une Donnée Ambiguë**

De nombreux travaux montrent aujourd'hui que la ville n'est pas ce cadre de modernité qu'elle prétend véhiculer. En effet, la ville en Afrique, en général, et au Cameroun, en particulier, est le cadre de cohabitation entre la vie moderne et la vie traditionnelle. C'est qu'au sein de la modernité urbaine, émergent parallèlement des cultures de terroir. Cette thèse est présente chez Jean Marc Ela dans **La ville en Afrique Noire** et reprise et améliorée dans son article intitulé Approche sociologique du rural. Si l'approche d'Ela paraît être théorique, des auteurs comme Eric De Rosny, en partant de l'exemple de la maladie dans **L'Afrique des guérisons**, montrent l'ambivalence de cette bipolarité existentielle. Tout cela fait apparaître le caractère paradoxal de la ville comprise à la fois comme village et comme ville. Dans le cadre de l'ethnicité, ce paradoxe d'une ville comprise comme village et comme ville est aussi opératoire. Ainsi, en ville les gens reproduisent leurs cultures respectives différentes de la culture urbaine moderne. Et c'est cette culture qui guide et oriente la vie sociale en un milieu urbain. Il est dès lors normal que les Ewondo se réfèrent à des logiques de fonctionnement traditionnel de leur société. Cependant même si le pays des Ewondo abrite la capitale politique du Cameroun et que, de ce fait, ce groupe joue un rôle très important sur la socialité et la convivialité ethnique en tant que communauté d'accueil, il

importe de savoir pourquoi le phénomène du *Ntobo* a connu de l'ampleur et des conséquences négatives pendant les années 1990/91/92/93 dans les rapports entre les Ewondo, (les Béti en général) et les Bamiléké (le groupe dit Anglo-Bami, en général).

## **Le Pouvoir Politique, Facteur De La Citoyenneté D'autochtonie**

Le paradoxe de la ville cadre de modernité et de tradition, dont nous venons de faire état plus haut, n'a jamais été ni affronté, débattu encore moins jugulé par l'Etat<sup>84</sup> au Cameroun. Bien au contraire, l'autorité politique s'est servie de ce conflit pour asseoir et enraciner son pouvoir. Dans la nouvelle constitution promulguée le 18 Janvier 1996, l'article 56, alinéa 3 stipule que le conseil régional est présidé par une personnalité autochtone de la région élue en son sein pour la tirée du mandat du conseil. Le préambule de cette même constitution stipule que l'Etat assure la protection des minorités et préserve les droits des populations autochtones conformément à la loi. Au-delà des discussions sensibles que cet article a suscitées dans l'opinion publique camerounaise, d'après lesquelles le gouvernement a introduit le couple antithétique autochtone/allochtone, aborigène/indigène dans la loi fondamentale du pays (en effet, la nouvelle constitution ne fait nulle part mention explicitement du concept allochtone ou allogène comme l'a prétendu une certaine opinion), il serait quand même intéressant de s'interroger sur l'introduction d'un concept, aussi lourd d'implications et de conséquences comme autochtone dans un contexte de sensibilité et de replis identitaire. Celle introduction, en effet, implique déjà l'existence des allochtones. La question conséquente est la suivante: qui est autochtone, qui est allochtone, quels en sont les critères d'identification et de définition dans un contexte de modernité démocratique? Dans tous les cas, un tel acte donne l'impression que la définition de la citoyenneté incidente dans la constitution se fonde sur l'autochtonie. Or, le préambule de cette même constitution atteste clairement que *tout homme a le droit de se fixer en tout lieu et de se déplacer librement, sous réserve des prescriptions légales relatives à l'ordre, à la sécurité et à la tranquillité publics*. Lorsque la

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<sup>84</sup> Un débat actuel oppose des chercheurs sur la définition du concept d'Etat. En effet, ce concept fait lui-même appel, pour mieux être saisi, à des notions comme classe dirigeante, élite politique et aux structures stables et immuables qui symbolisent et matérialisent le concept abstrait d'Etat. Ainsi donc certains estiment que l'Etat se réduit à l'élite politique au pouvoir ou la classe dirigeante ; d'autres estiment que l'Etat c'est aussi et surtout les structures matérielles qui le symbolisent. De notre côté, nous estimons que la réalité abstraite de l'Etat est à cerner dans l'interaction entre ces structures matérielles et la caisse dirigeante qui les anime. Néanmoins, le rôle prépondérant que joue la classe dirigeante dans le fonctionnement de l'Etat explique souvent la réduction de l'Etat à la seule classe dirigeante. C'est d'ailleurs ce que nous-même nous faisons dans cet article.

constitution stipule donc explicitement que seule une personnalité autochtone peut présider le conseil régional, sa mission de garantir l'égalité de tous en droits et en devoirs n'est visiblement pas assurée.

Par ailleurs, l'article 57, alinéa 2 stipule que le conseil régional doit retenir les détergentes composantes sociologiques de la région concernée. Texte pas assez clair, c'est le gouvernement camerounais, par l'entremise du ministre de l'administration territoriale qui en avait facilité la compréhension et la signification lors des élections législatives de 1997. En effet, le MINAT avait rejeté de nombreuses listes des partis politiques parce qu'elles ne retentaient pas la composante sociologique de la région où ce parti investissait des candidats. Il fallait, en effet, que dans les Listes présentées, figurent bien les autochtones de la région comme représentant le parti. Cela signifie que la liste SDF du département du Mfoundi doit présenter autant d'autochtone, c'est-à-dire des Ewondo de Yaoundé que des allochtones. Tous les autres départements du pays devaient également respecter cette règle. Lors des inscriptions sur les listes électorales lors de ces mêmes élections législatives, il a été ouvertement demandé à certains allochtones, notamment le groupe taxé d'Anglo-Bami d'aller se faire enregistrer et d'aller voter chez eux, sous le regard partialement muet des autorités administratives compétentes. Ainsi, réapparurent avec une vigueur exceptionnelle, les affiliations ethnique ou tribu d'origine, province et département d'origine dans la présentation des candidats aux élections. Au terme de ces faits, on peut conclure que pour l'Etat, même si ce n'est pas mentionné de manière explicite et formelle quelque part, l'identification de la citoyenneté se fonde sur l'autochtonie. En clair, quand on n'est pas autochtone d'une certaine région, on ne peut pas jouir des mêmes droits qu'une personne qui en est autochtone (cf. article 57, alinéa 3 ci-haut). En d'autres termes, l'identification de la citoyenneté peut encore tenir compte des registres traditionnels, notamment l'autochtonie. Si le terme *Ntobo* qui renvoie, comme nous l'avons vu plus haut, aux structures traditionnelles de la citoyenneté chez les Ewondo a été exacerbé à un moment de la vie sociale au Cameroun, c'est que la loi fondamentale elle-même permettait les chevauchements selon lesquels on vit dans un Etat moderne avec des référents fonctionnels traditionnels. Le Cameroun, par ailleurs n'est pas le seul pays où l'on rencontre ce phénomène. Les débats très actuels sur l'Ivoirite des Ivoiriens en Côte d'Ivoire est la preuve que ce problème de citoyenneté se rapportant à des référents ethniques est très actuel en Afrique. En effet, la loi électorale ivoirienne selon laquelle pour être éligible à la présidence de la République, il faut non seulement être Ivoirien, mais aussi avoir des parents eux-mêmes Ivoiriens de naissance, semble mettre hors course le candidat Alassane Ouattara que les autorités Ivoiriennes disent être de nationalité



burkinabè. Pourtant Alassane Ouattara a été premier ministre de la République de Côte d'Ivoire de 1990 jusqu'en 1993, à la mort du président Houphouët Boigny et il a même brièvement assuré l'intérim à la présidence de la république à la mort de ce dernier. Cette loi a d'ailleurs été qualifiée à raison de charcutage électoral ethnique par des nombreux observateurs (Jeune Afrique W 2014-2015 du 30 Aout au 30 Aout 1999, P. 17)<sup>85</sup>. Des mêmes considérations sur la citoyenneté ont disqualifié l'ancien président Zambien Kenneth Kaunda de se porter candidat aux élections contre le président Frederick Chiluba (Jeune Afrique, Op. Cit. P.17)

Ceci confirme bel et bien l'approche constructiviste d'après laquelle l'ethnicité est sujette à manipulation par les leaders politiques en Afrique. Mais ce seul constructivisme n'explique pas de manière holistique tous les conflits et confrontations qu'il y a eu lors des années de crise au Cameroun dans la socialité et la cohabitation entre par exemple les Ewondo (Béti en général) et le groupe dit Anglo-Bami. C'est en sculptant l'imaginaire socio-ethnique des Ewondo que l'on découvre le côté perception du Bamiléké qui donne à l'approche constructiviste toute la vigueur opératoire.

En effet, le rejet du Bamiléké s'est enraciné et s'est accru dans l'imaginaire Ewondo d'après la perception selon laquelle les Bamiléké sont des envahisseurs; ils auraient un plan secret d'occupation de la grande zone forestière, donc concrètement les provinces du Centre, du Sud et de l'Est; ils auraient également les projets de prise du pouvoir politique parce que déjà détenteur du pouvoir économique; cette dernière perception s'est d'ailleurs accrue durant les mois de Juillet et d'Aout où la hiérarchie de l'église catholique a nommé Mgr André Wouking, d'origine Bamiléké, remplaçant du défunt Archevêque de Yaoundé, Mgr Jean Zoa, à Yaoundé en pays Ewondo; pour certains, la prise du pouvoir spirituel par les Bamiléké symboliserait déjà une imminente prise du pouvoir politique<sup>86</sup>; les barricades qui ont été dressées au quartier Messassi à Yaoundé par quelques agitateurs étaient la preuve du refus d'un Evêque allochtone, un Evêque Bamiléké dans la capitale politique.

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<sup>85</sup> Entre-temps, beaucoup de choses se sont passées en Côte d'Ivoire. En Décembre 1999, un coup d'Etat militaire a renversé M. Henri Konan Bédié et installé au fauteuil présidentiel le Général Gueï.

Des janvier 2000, M. Alassane Ouattara est rentré en Côte d'Ivoire au moment où l'expresident, M. Henri Konan Bédié prenait la route de l'exil pour la France.

<sup>86</sup> Pourtant, un Evêque de tribu Ewondo à également été nommé à Bafoussam, en pays Bamiléké ; mais, cette nomination ne suscite pas autant de commentaires que celle de Mgr André Wouking à Yaoundé. Ceci confirme peut-être les idées de l'opinion publique selon lesquelles Yaoundé, en tant que capitale politique et siège des Institutions, est bien un endroit stratégique que la classe politique Béti, supposée être détentrice du pouvoir politique ? Ne saurait-elle laisser au contrôle des Anglo-Bami qualifiés d'opposants quel que soit leur statut, et que les Anglo-Bami, supposés être détenteurs du pouvoir économique? Voudraient-ils conquérir.



La presse privée en a fait état notamment Le Messenger W 956 du lundi 23 Aout 1999, par son titre très évocateur à ce sujet LE VOICI<sup>87</sup> DONC A YAOUNDE. WOUKING A PRIS LE POUVOIR. Enfin, les Bamiléké auraient dupé les Ewondo dans la transaction foncière. La chasse aux Bamiléké qu'il y a donc eu pendant les périodes chaudes au Cameroun n'aurait donc été qu'un rééquilibrage, une reconquête de leurs terres anciennement vendues à vii prix. L'avenir compromis de certaines familles urbaines comme les MvogAda, les MvogAtemengue, les MvogMbi... après cette transaction foncière justifierait également de telles tentatives de reconquête,

## Conclusion

A la fin, nous pouvons dire que l'Etat camerounais, comme peut-être de nombreux Etats Africains oscille entre la tradition et la modernité. Le pouvoir politique se sert encore suffisamment de cette ambigüité fonctionnelle. C'est dans cette perspective que les logiques de fonctionnement traditionnel de certains groupes apparaissent dans le fonctionnement moderne que véhicule aujourd'hui tout Etat, en général, et le Cameroun, en particulier. L'analyse du phénomène du Ntobo chez les Ewondo faite dans cet article en est une illustration. Ce problème n'est d'ailleurs pas nouveau au Cameroun. Dans certaines sociétés, il y a une interférence entre structures traditionnelles et Etat central. Certains sultanats, notamment celui de Rey Bouba, au Nord-Cameroun brille par un fonctionnement aboutissant logiquement à la conclusion d'un Etat dans l'Etat. Ce problème devrait bénéficier d'une réflexion profonde si le Cameroun veut se doter des institutions modernes garantes de son développement,

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<sup>87</sup> Ce titre reproduit un peu le président Paul Biya alors en tournée dans la province du Littoral au plus fort des villes mortes en 1991, qui pour répondre d'une manière ou d'une autre a une certaine opinion selon laquelle il ne pourrait pas mettre pied à Douala, avait dit Me voici donc à Douala. Cette phrase était dite probablement de manière à répondre à cette opinion; en fait, entière, cette phrase était la suivante : Me voici à Douala, porteur d'un message de paix et de réconciliation. Réponse du berger à la bergère, la presse d'opposition Le Messenger, face à une opinion qui estimait qu'il ne peut pas avoir d'Evêque Bamiléké à Yaoundé à répondu aussi par ce titre.

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## Globalisation, Democratization, Exploitation and the State in Africa: The Final Conquest?

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### Abstract

*Globalization has been a feature of world history. And, to understand what globalization is all about, one may need to trace the development of capitalism in its three historic phases: mercantile, industrial and financial. The motive force of globalization during each phase has been private and corporate accumulation of capital. This accumulation is facilitated through the removal of all barriers to the movement of capital. The capital globalizes itself in order to sell its knowledge, intensive products and services, and to exploit cheaper resources of human labour (skilled and unskilled) and raw materials. It is through these phases that the state in Africa has been brought under the heel of international finance capital. And, as dependent states, functionally, they lubricate the export-import capitalist economy. And financially, are heavily reliant on, and subordinate to, capital. Today, globalization has compelled the drive toward the democratization of the state in Africa as the best possible political shell for capitalism. The preference given to “democratic republics” in Africa is because they best disguise some of the more marked aspects of capitalist exploitation. What can be done to save the state in Africa and Africans from exploitation and suppression by capital in its final conquest of the continent? The answer to this question lies in the demand for the “new national democratic revolution” in Africa. In other words, who exploits whom and oppresses whom as the economic essence of globalisation must be identified and battled down.*

### Introduction

In English, the concept globalisation means the transition to a geo-finance system during the 1980s. Whereas in French (as in all Latin languages) “globalisation “relates essentially to the geographical dimension of the phenomenon. However, the phenomenon does not date from the 1980s. The origins lie in the history of the modern Western world since the 15th century

the period when economic internationalization became the foundation of capitalist society.

The end of the Cold War (with the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989) triggered a marked shift in the dynamics of international politics with the geo-military factor ceding prominence to strategies for meeting the challenges of economic internationalisation or globalization. Caught once again at the crossroads of history, Africa's predicament within the new delusive dictum of democratization and globalization raises questions as to its congeniality to a culture of democracy. That is to say, to what extent and with what consequences does the post-colonial experience political, economic, social, cultural and ideological manifestations and structures constitute a series of structural limitations to the momentum and ambitions of democratization in Africa?

Given the history and nature of democratization in the 1990s, its class/ethnic and ideological content, how is the state in Africa to be characterized in the light of the current configuration of forces at global level? What have been the achievements and pitfalls? And, on the basis of such analysis, what is the future of the democratization for Africa in the face of globalization? Furthermore, is globalization the final conquest of Africa by international finance capital?

These, indeed, are not idle questions. This paper is an attempt to explain why things are what they are in Africa today. And how, on the basis of the current configuration of domestic and global forces, may those interested begin to organize and plan for the way forward!

## **Aborted Hopes and State Collapse**

Historically, globalization or the internationalization of finance capital with private and corporate accumulation of capital as its force motrice acquired a rapacious character in the 1880s. This was the period of maturation in the West of the institution of the joint stock company, of banking, of industrial capital, and of the development of deep mining technology. This was when globalization exploded the "scramble for Africa" licenced and sold to the West as the "white man's burden" to civilize the "senile and savage" Africans.

Globalization or the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union in 1917? Sovietism stood opposed to globalization by the North for some 70 Years. This Cold War period enabled Africa to acquire a measure of independence for itself.

The struggle for independence in Africa, armed or unarmed, was not oblivious of the fact that private and corporate accumulation of capital, not

the welfare of Africans through its distribution, was the motive force of globalization. This preoccupation explains why African nationalists proclaimed insistently, in Mugabe's words, that:

*The first object of our armed struggle is the attainment of total and unfettered independence so we can rule ourselves as we deem fit and develop our country in the general interests of the (African) masses.*

These pious hopes and grand designs of African nationalists were pitted against the historical conjuncture in which globalization was a serious factor in the determination of the course to be taken in the post-independence era. All nationalists, like Kwame Nkrumah, soon discovered the rapacious character of capital:

*The reality of neo-colonialism quickly becomes obvious to a new African Government which tries to act in economic matters and in the betterment of its own masses. For such a Government immediately discovers that it inherited the power to make laws, to direct the civil service, to treat with foreign Governments and so on, but it did not inherit effective power over economic development in its own country. Indeed, it often discovers that there is no such thing as a national economy'.*

The absence of "national economy" assigns a strange role to the post-colonial state. Could the state pursue the developmentalist objectives of independence in response to the popular aspirations and expectation of the masses? Could it counter the economic and political weight (full and direct) of international finance capital as it continued to exploit the human and material resources in the neo-colonial situation? No. And, why?

*Herein lies the contradictory character of the post-colonial state. It is at the best of times a state split in two: a schizophrenic state, a state torn apart between on the one hand the democratic forces of the people, and on the other hand the imperialist forces of the international financial Oligarchy. This split is in evidence right through all the police, the court system, the parliament and even the government itself (including the cabinet), and we might add, even the political parties. Indeed, even individual political leaders sometimes display schizophrenic tendencies when they feel impelled on the one hand to respond to the democratic demands of the people, and on the other hand, feel the pressure of international capital on them which impels them to suppress those very demands they would want to respond to but cannot.*

This existential situation undermined the political independence of African states that sought to delink from the capitalist world system. This is why, as Nyerere stated, it is impossible to explain Africa's current predicament without acknowledging international finance capital as its basic cause. The reason is that:

*The gap between African poverty and the wealth of the developed nations gets larger. African nations get further into debt and have less and less ability even to sustain such economic progress as they had earlier made. Then, when the natural disasters of drought or flood strike, the quid pro quo for temporary relief is liable to be facilities for military or communication units of a Great Power, or the forced adoption of their economic policies. And if an African nation is not sufficiently cooperative, then the lessons of Angola and of Libya are there to see to say nothing of the more subtle and camouflaged interventions in our political systems which are frequent.*

This does not mean that each African government is always a lone-goer. From time to time, African governments have indeed shown remarkable unity. In 1979, they agreed on a common long-term economic plan of action for Africa, called the Lagos Plan of Action. Unfortunately, no sooner the ink was dry than one by one of these governments compromised to the domestic demands of the moment and pressure from the donor community. The pressure was for them to abandon the Plan and get down to their old ways of doing bilateral things with donors and the World Bank.

The impact of globalization's aggression on the state in Africa was enormous. First, governments, by the 1980s had lost their ability even to protect national interests against further encroachments on their sovereignty. Second, the state bore the hallmarks of a predatory one. That is, the pillars of the state were expropriation, extortion, the inflation of taxes, and corruption. And, of course, the predatory state was obviously inconsistent with economic development because it discouraged productivity and led inexorably to misallocation of resources, culminating generally in its collapse as a rogue state.

The collapsed state was not one that failed to do the right things, but one that failed to do much of anything effectively - even maintaining repressive order. Three broad and overlapping pathologies of state collapse could easily be identified:

- a. States that lost (or failed to establish) legitimacy in the eyes of most of the population, notionally unable to exercise that authority like Moi's Kenya.
- b. States that were run into the ground by leaders and officials who were corrupt, negligent, incompetent, or all three like Cameroon;

c. States that were fragmented in civil war, and in which no party was capable of re-establishing central authority like Angola.

### **Globalization or “end of geography”?**

The emergent position” in international politics is that we live in a new era of “economic globalization”. This global system is driven by uncontrollable international financial market forces. It is dominated by large transnational companies that source, invest, produce and market wherever their economic advantage dictates.

For example, 40% of world exports are controlled by just 100 undertakings. There are also sectoral arrangements between companies operating in the area leading to the emergence of global oligopolies. And statistics show that genuine integration in terms of trade and direct investments is taking place. Since 1990, world trade has increased by 6% per annum, as against under 4% per annum during the 1980s. In 1995 world trade in goods increased by 8% in volume terms, four times the growth in world GDP.

These global market forces are beyond governance by states. This implies that African states have no effective role in macro-economic policy other than adjusting to the dictates of world markets. They cannot alter the rate of growth or the rate of employment by national manipulation of macro-economic aggregates.

Globalization directly affects and constrains the social policy of a state. The argument is that welfare rights and benefits, tax levels, and labour market policies that deviate from the minimum level acceptable to international finance capital will render the society in question uncompetitive and lead to capital flight. Thus, public policy in any state should follow the needs of international capital rather than trying to alter the economic environment by changing the behaviour of economic actors.

This demonstrates that states cannot singly or collectively govern world markets. The only roles remaining to them are to promote competitiveness of local economic actors and to make their territory as attractive as possible to inward investment by internationally mobile capital. Thus, the discourse of “international competitiveness” is the natural companion to that of globalization.

Globalization therefore signals the “end of geography.” Its principal objective is to remove all barriers to the movement of capital and to “raise” standards of products that enter the international market. Private and



corporate accumulation of capital, not the welfare of people through its distribution, is the motive force of globalization.

This announces the death of any legacy of Keynes and the welfare state. National attempts at policies of social solidarity, equality, fairness and collective reinsurance against economic shocks are obsolete. That is, international capital will only accept a minimum safety net and the barest of intervention humanizing and civilizing capitalism. So, assuming that a market society without losers could be created and sustained is an illusion when self-interested corporate classes and global markets call the tune.

Capital globalizes itself both to sell its knowledge intensive products and services, and to exploit cheaper resources human (skilled and unskilled) and raw materials. This globalization is intended to overcome the triple crises inherent in the capitalist system of production.

One of the periodic paroxysms of crises is the permanent tension between the financial system (fictitious money capital) and its real, material “value” base leading to occasional adjustments when prices of stocks and shares tumble to bring some semblance of a relationship between fictitious and material capital.

The second crisis is the individualized appropriation of collectively generated surplus value. This surplus value has created the world’s 358 billionaires whose assets exceed the combined annual incomes of countries with 45% of mankind, especially where the poor starve and die in their thousands.

And the third crisis is the overproduction of commodities faced by the limitations of the market. An equitable distribution of incomes worldwide could theoretically create an effective market for these products. But this cannot happen.

The UNDP in its Human Development Report, 1996 says: “The world has become more polarised and the gulf between the poor and the rich has widened even further. Of the US \$23 trillion global GDP in 1993, \$18 trillion is in the industrial countries; they have nearly 80% of the world’s people: in terms of wealth, not numbers.

In fact, international economic relations are now an obvious game of the powerful. And contemporary globalization ordains the rule that the strong can now extract what they will. The weak must surrender what they cannot protect. Thus, geographical walls now face the fate of the Berlin Wall.

### **The State in Africa and Democratization: The Final Conquest?**

What is the nature of the state in Africa? How has this state fared with internationalized capital as well as production and marketing? The world

economy is integrated such that national boundaries do not make economic sense any longer (“end of geography”), so what is the significance of democratizing the state in Africa?

These questions can best be answered when we look at the phenomenon of the world capitalist system in its totality. That is, we must use the method of dialectical materialism, a science of studying and apprehending nature and society whose method is dialectical (the law of contradiction), and whose theory is materialist (the primacy of matter over mind).

Marx and Engels saw the state as an organ: the political power of the oppressing class. And political power, according to the Communist Manifesto, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. The implication here is that the state is a class category and that state (political power) always has a class character.

Lenin’s instructive position on the question of the meaning of political independence is clear: “That political independence does not mean that finance capital is unable to continue dominating independent countries. In this case of Africa, political independence did not mean economic independence. Finance capital subordinated the economics of these “sovereign” states to the extent that the only change at independence was that the personnel of the state apparatus was now recruited from the local petty bourgeoisie. Indeed, independence meant a change in government, not the state:

*As the state arose from the need to hold class antagonism in check, but as it arose, at the same time, in the midst of conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful economically dominant class, which through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and this acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class.*

If Lenin could say the following in 1916, it is a hundred times true in Africa today:

The enormous dimensions of finance capital concentrated in a few hands and creating an extraordinarily dense and widespread network of relationships and connections and which subordinates not only the small and medium, but also the very small capitalists and small masters, on the one hand, and the increasingly intense struggle waged against their national state groups of financiers for the division of the world and domination over other countries, on the other hand, cause the propertied classes to go over entirely to the side of Imperialism.

Since the financial oligarchy is the economically dominant class, it also rules politically and is therefore the ruling class; the owners of capital are also the owners of the state, particularly the state in Africa.

This leaves one with a question rarely raised in discussions of democratization of Africa: What part does the international financial oligarchy, never a neutral partner in African affairs, play? Capital facilitated, promoted even the import of foreign structures and institutions from all over the world as if pre-colonial Africa had no political, economic and social structures of their own.

Capital propped up authoritarian regimes, considered to be its strategic allies for decades, and then suddenly swerved to the defence of the “democratic cause”. Reverend Jose Chipenda observed with regret that ‘Since 1990, African countries have spent over US\$ 1 billion on the formation and servicing of multiparty democracies, with hardly any country emerging with a stable and mature multiparty system of governance.’ Yet, African countries have embarked on the road to democracy with varying degrees of enthusiasm and resistance. But questions are increasingly being asked about the validity of Western-style democracy for Africa. In fact, these questions become increasingly pointed as, here and there, the democracy movement suffers reverses and regression to autocracy.

Of course, Africa is home to 32 of the 47 poorest countries in the world. And the World Bank as well as the IMF bait democratizing states with a structural adjustment programme whose objective is to perpetuate its monocultural economic system, its external dependence which renders it highly susceptible to external shocks. Thus, there is no room for pursuing the goal of diversifying and transforming the economy of any African state.

The danger which belies this trend is the rejection of the will of the people as the basis of governmental authority. It is perhaps for this reason that UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan has warned that the mad rush toward globalization in the 21st century is an indication that countries, especially those in Africa, which do not define their democratic and developmental models before the third millennium, will find themselves stuck in the “seething cauldron of chaos and conclusion.” And the chaos and confusion” will only facilitate the final conquest of the state in Africa by finance capital.

### **Which way Africa?**

The British historian, Basil Davidson insists that “History’s conclusion is that Africa has tried to work the wrong models”. So what is the way out for Africa? First of all, the national economy remains a viable analytical category.

And it is within this arena that choices are made. The democratizing state in Africa can strengthen its local community-based system of production and marketing.” This will enable the state to control local resources away from the hands of globalizing international corporations. Indeed, economic policy, in particular with regard to distribution, is not dictated by economic globalization but subject to political decisions at home.

Secondly, the state can slow down its further integration into the world capitalist system. That is, the state should maintain its ability to protect national interests against further encroachments on its sovereignty implied in globalization’s aggression.

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## **The Politics of Democratization, Ethnicity and its Management in Africa, with Experience from Cameroon**

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### **Political or Belly Kingdom**

Can a study of democratization and ethnicity in Algeria, Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, etc. hold general lessons? Is the state of ethnicity and ethnic conflict the same in these countries? Did democratization begin with the granting of independence to Ghana following the fall out of Macmillan's famous speech of the "wind of change blowing across the continent of Africa?" Africa since the late 1950s and early 1960s jumped on the bandwagon of democratization and good governance for better or worse. Nkrumah's adage of "seek ye first the political kingdom" was practically converted to "fill ye my stomach" by the new generation of African leaders and their subordinate citizens.

Some analyst even doubt that African states are yet to democratize. Their argument is that African states since the attainment of political independence have been more concerned with "belly politics" rather than the proper transfer and appropriate use of power to address the changing and challenging predicaments of the society. It is the governing elites and not the masses that matters. As long as the elites enjoy the benefits of the nation's wealth, there is the presumption that all is fine with the suffering population or the rest of society can go to hell and as long as the power base of the ruling elites is not contested and threatened by the suffering silent majority.

In the mythologies of Western experience, democracy means a clash of opposing interests resulting in the voting of the "ins" out of power and instituting of government of responsibility and accountability that respects the inalienable rights of all citizens. So far, power in Africa is contained in a conservative consensus- a consensus of the ganging up between the ruling elites and the West, and in the interest of the later. To succeed in this process the issues of ethnic conflict and confrontation is constantly fanned by the new stake holders thereby penalizing civil society as the custodian for the process of change and sustainability of democratic governance system.

The paper takes a look on two outstanding issues -democratization as a concept and as a need system of governance for Africa, and Cameroon in particular: ethnicity as an input factor that moves forward or pervades the process of good governance within the society, and as compass for new scholarship and discourse. In this regard, what institutions and structures are necessary to ensure a harmonious ethnic, social, economic, political and cultural patterns of relationship in society? What alternative futures for the society in question? The argumentative premises of departure is that the ethnic question in Cameroon is a natural factor which has been given greater impetus by colonialism and strongly propagated by post-colonial and neo-colonial politics and leaders to ensure and maintain a political power base for governance. That wrong use of ethnic diversity jeopardizes the structural-functional base of the polity. The things fall apart as a result of this no surprise.

The return to pluralistic party politics show how fragile the political bases of many leaders were. Political actors deploy the transition to democracy to fuel and exacerbated ethnic conflicts. On the other hand, globalization of the economy equally intensifies the need for more natural resources (most of which are scare and depleting). This has generated conflict over natural resources and ethnic confrontation between groups and peoples on control over land and resources.

Hence, the need for society to fashion out a co-habitation strategy and code of conduct for the various ethnic constellation to perceive themselves as citizens of one nation sharing the wealth as well as the predicament of the nation. In short; national unity within the common framework of ethnic diversity or diversity in unity. A sense of belonging is required. Institutions must reflect and operate within the overall context of creating and sustaining the “common sense of belonging” within the territorial boundaries of the nation.

Conversely, the absence of that sense of belonging, compromise consensus, tolerance, acceptance, social justice and equality, rule of law and participatory approach to good management and distribution of resources constitute an indictment to confrontation and instability with the consequent result of the nation falling apart. Numerous examples abound the world over of the disastrous outcome of the existence of a tyrannical minority or majority lording it over others - Biafra, Burundi, Kosovo, Somalia, depicts nation - states falling apart because of the lack of respect for the rights and opinion of others. The underlying issue is that democracy and nation-states flourish when they are tended by citizens willing to use their hard won freedom to participate in the life of their society - adding their voices to the public debate, electing



and throwing out representatives who are held accountable for their actions; and accepting the need for tolerance and compromise to public life. The citizens of a democracy enjoy the right of individual freedom, but they also share the responsibility of joining to share a future that will continue to embrace the fundamental values of freedom and self-government. These are issues yet to be implanted within the political landscape of Cameroon.

### **Minority Rights and Majority Rule**

The departing premises build on the slogan of majority rule and minority rights. The rights of the minority must be respected and in no way must minority tyrannical rule prevail over the majority. Yet rule by the majority is not necessary democratic. No one can, for example tolerate or call a system fair and just that permit say 39% of the population to oppress 36% in the name of majority; or a 20% turn out vote cast as demonstrated by the Cameroon presidential election of 1992 and 1997 respectfully as being democratic.

In a democratic society, majority rule must be coupled with guarantees of individual human rights that, in turn, serve to protect the rights of the minorities - whether ethnic, religious or political, or simply the losers of the debate over a controversial issues; for example, the creation of an independent electoral commission (IEC) to oversee the conduct of a free and fair election as demanded by opposition parties in Cameroon, or the institutionalization of the Ministry of Territorial Administration as both the player, referee and spectator in handling elections in Cameroon.

What is fundamental is that the rights of minorities do not depend on the goodwill of the majority and cannot be eliminated by majority vote. The Anglophones in Cameroon constitute a minority. But this does not imply that their rights should trample upon and eliminated or abrogated by an existing Francophone majority. Nor does it imply that the Beti's as a minority in comparison to the total population of the country must lord their hegemony over the rest of the nation just because one of them happens to be Head of State.

The truism is that the rights of minorities are protected because democratic laws and institutions protect the rights of all citizens. This implies also that the laws of the nation - **Constitution** - is construed to limit the powers of the government and guarantees fundamental rights to all citizens. In such a society, the majority rules, and the right of minorities are protected by the law and through the institutionalization of good laws.

A pertinent issue to address is simply the question of why some nations fail to institutionalize political freedom, good governance and others succeed?

Why some nations to a large extent have contained ethnic fragmentation and others have not? Should ethnic diversity be seen as a liability or an asset to a nation? However, two explanations seem plausible and most compelling. To begin with, democracy has conditions. And these conditions focus on the realm of values and the socioeconomic realm. In these perspectives, without a solid democratization and cultural heritage or a large middle class, socioeconomic foundation, the democratic political edifice that people attempted to erect would end up very shaky, and eventually come tumbling down. Much illuminating scholarship ensued concerning democratic values and middleclass cum market domination as preconditions for democratic consolidation. Many analysts continue to seek explanations for democratization in terms of a critical dimension distinguishing West from East (see Downing, (1992:39); Huntington (1991); and others).

The focus is to illuminate democracy and ethnicity from a more universal and positive perspective, one grounded in the cultural and economic particularities of Africa within the global context. The idea therefore, is to explore general political explanations for the different outcomes of attempts to consolidate democracy and ethnicity as an inherent factor that should be properly exploited for developmental rather than destructive ends. Democracy should be understood as system and process by which citizens freely and fairly choose their officials to run government in an accountable manner. From these perspectives, most African countries are not democratic and show no signs of moving towards the democratic ideal. Admittedly, a particular culture or economy may somehow facilitate or obstruct the building of the political institution of democracy. The opinion is that once the political institution of the liberal democracy is implanted within a society, it becomes possible to study more or less successful political experiments as well as learn how to build a stable democracy (see Horowitz, 1992).

With politics understood as the key to institutionalizing a democratic breakthrough, one is better placed to treat the vicissitudes of democratization and ethnicity in Africa as integral to a universal human project - democracy as indicated by Haggard (1990). By and large, Africa is faced with the realities of truer organic democracies or people's democracies - Orwellian double speak or self-delusion. We see the state as either the mere violent embodiment of a dominant class or the true embodiment of a pure community leads to a despotic polity. Hence, we ignore the need to desegregate the state into diverse institutions so that an independent judiciary, due process of law, human and civil rights can be guaranteed as protectors of liberty. Or we ignore the need to see society as complex of ambiguous identities and projects such that the

imposition of the state defined by a simple totalized community cannot help but have an anti -democratic thrust.

Given this understanding of democracy, Africa in general and Cameroon in particular have failed in creating functional democratic institutions. On the other hand, it can be argued that the continent has made progress towards the attainment of a democratic society since the granting of independence to many of colonies in the late 1950s, and early 1960s. This argument is based on the following comparative analyses. Women in France started voting only after 1945; blacks in America were kept off the voting machinery until the mid-1960s. Both France and the United States are counted as democratic.

Apparently, franchise came to the African woman at the time of independence; both minority and majority ethnic groups were given the right to vote and to participate in the body politic of the society. From the word go, a positive democratic trend was set in motion in Africa at the dawn of independence? What has defeated this exemplary political development in Cameroon? What factors have contributed to the sudden collapse or abrogation of the political culture that was in the making less than a decade after the attainment of independence? Why has the judiciary lost its independence, the rule of law set aside, human rights violated, and civil society destroyed, with minority tyranny taking over majority rule or the tyranny of the majority wrongly institutionalized and legalized over all principles of democratic governance? Why have the Cameroonian people thrown away the child (democracy) with the bath water? For the ruling party, the abrogation of democratic principles is classified as **“advanced democracy”**. A classification that is not only false but betrays the notion of democracy and the general definition of the concept as meaning different things to different people and nation.

## Conceptual Framework

Both Gros (1998) and Sorenson (1993) see democratization as a transition phenomenon involving a gradual, mainly elite-driven transformation of the formal rules that govern a political system. By and large, democracy is not an end-game; rather, it means to an end in the view of Dahl (1971). Furthermore; countries democratize so as to become democratic in the long run. A democratizing country can be distinguished from a nondemocratic one mainly by differences in political culture. Hence democratization might be described as stage in the evolution of a country where the rules governing power alteration and state-society relations though ostensibly based on democratic ideals, have not been fully internalized. Secondly, democratization presupposes

a taming and neutralization of the elite's anti-democratic, military and security forces. And democracy is a process that institutionalizes fair, general rules that risk a loss of power.

Conventional wisdom on ethnicity hold that the only way ethnicity could be managed is to eradicate it. It is argued that because the major consequences of ethnic conflict is nation-destroying rather than nation-building, states bedevilled by such conflict or desirous of becoming nations must devise ways of eradicating it. This wisdom is right to the extent where ethnic conflict is perceived as real, not false or epiphenomenal. But it is wrong in prescribing eradication because this presupposes that ethnic groups and divisions which provide the bases for conflicts can themselves be eradicated.

The experiences of multi-ethnic societies the world over, show that the notion of eradication is not valid. Rather, the entire point in managing or mismanaging ethnic conflicts is .the acknowledgement that they cannot be washed away or eradicated and, at the same time, cannot be left alone because they are capable of destroying states. Cameroon runs the risk of destroying itself in several ways. The underlying thesis is-that democratization processes, by their very notion of mobilizing greater participation and placing the question of control (and sharing or distribution) of state power and resources on top of the political agenda" exacerbate ethnic conflicts and tensions and therefore make their management a critical matter, not only for the success of democratization but also for the survival of the state as a whole. There is need' therefore for examining the etiology of ethnic conflicts and how the democratization process impacts on it by heightening or reducing these conflicts. This becomes' evident 'in respect of exploring' the situation in terms of such variables as competition for scarce resources, uneven development, class conflict amongst others. Equally important is to see. hew ethnicity impacts on democratization processes. The empirical evidence is drawn 'mainly from Cameroon, with comparative mores being provided from the experiences of-other African countries.

### **A Faulty Process - Basis of Argument**

Dahl and Lindblom (1953:42) note that "governments are organizations that have a sufficient monopoly of control to enforce an orderly settlement of disputes with other organizations in the area. Whoever controls government usually has the "last word" on question, whoever controls government can enforce decisions on other

organizations in the area." The views of Dahl and Lindblom relates to the functionality of society. No society is perfectly integrated, and although any

social system is built on conformity of its members to expectations, this conformity is not automatic. The process of democratization is never completely successful - whether as regards a particular nation or group of countries. Diverse functional problems and cultural residue prevent the structures from having perfect clarity, consistency, and effectiveness, delicate problems arise from the balancing and inter-meshing of various civil society groups in the total polity and strains are inevitably set-up.

Students of ethnicity have demonstrated that multi-ethnicity, no matter how complex it may be, does not by itself produce conflicts (Barrows, 1976, 1992). Rephrased differently, and seen within the perspectives of groups combining but not mixing, as well as borrowing from Smith's (1965) description of ethnic apartness in a plural society, people do not tear themselves apart basically because they belong to different ethnic setting.

A further explanation is presented by Okamura (1981) and Osaghae (1994) that ethnicity is aptly summarized by the situationality thesis that ethnic conflicts ensue in situations which present conditions under which competing actors -as individuals, groups or classes - find the ethnic resource expedient. Thus in situations where the conditions do not permit of ethnic calculation or where ethnic considerations are eclipsed by class, religious, regional or such other contending divisive resources, ethnic conflicts are not likely to occur. Such a situation provide some form of hope in the transformation of cleavages from the ethnic to class or party identity a la Geert's (1963) integrative revolutions as a form of addressing ethnic conflicts.

It is clear that ethnic diversity and conflicts are deep rooted. The attainment of independence and the failure of governments to respond positively to the needs and aspirations of the people have only revealed the solid ethno-undercurrents in the society. The experiences of several multi-ethnic states in Africa: Nigeria. Cameroon, Kenya etc. have shown, they do not disappear, rather have intensified, particularly in the past decades of economic hardship faced by many of these countries.

In some cases, "they may be latent, suppressed, displaced or simply well-managed, but they remain a sore which hurts now and soothes later" (Osaghae 1994). Even in countries that have introduced socialist forms of governance and frameworks for resolving the national question as well as managing ethnic conflicts, have crumbled into violent crises following the release of ethnic nationalism through democratization.

## The Cameroon Situation

Cameroon is a nation-state engulfed with more than 230 ethnic groups and a complicated chequered colonial and post-colonial political process-an Achilles heel of the post-colonial state. There are at least two possible analytically distinct phases of the democratization process and as well as two varieties of ethnic conflicts in Cameroon. Beginning with ethnic conflicts, we may distinguish between public realm ethnicity that centres around determining who gets what when and how. The other concerns the private realm which may not necessarily involve state 'intervention. Given the state of limited development in the private sector in the country, our concern here is focused on public realm ethnicity. So far this form of public realm ethnicity has not manifested itself into a civil war like the case of Nigeria (1966 - 70) and Belgium Congo (in the early 1960s).

However the likelihood of such a development hangs in the balance in view of the Anglophone - francophone divide where the former are marginalized within the political machinery of the state. In other words, any form of secession can develop into a serious conflict between the two groups. At the lower realm concerning tribal conflicts, this remains a constant feature in certain parts of the country, particularly in the North West and in the three Northern provinces and mostly cantered around issues of competition for land and scarce resources. The northern parts of Cameroon constitute a critical source of ethnic tension and the South - West and North - West with respect to regionalism could be regarded as a variant of ethnicity. Because of the intricate interweaving of the related cleavages, a regional or religious conflict can very likely emerge as ethnic it serves to sharpen ethnic differences between the various provinces in the country.

Another realm of the competition for scarce resources can be seen within the framework of colonialism and peripheral capitalist formation which generated new and competitive notions of development and conflicts amongst the various groups. It also intensified existing conflicts as well as generated new ones between the different groups. Equally seen within this context is the competition for public jobs, admissions into schools, especially institutions of higher learning or specialized schools, and distribution of state resources, appointment, other critical aspects of uneven development, through the location of development projects amongst others are sources of competition.

So far, the pervasiveness or regularity and intensity of ethnic conflicts in Cameroon is not as acute as in some other countries, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Burundi and Rwanda where the Hutu and Tutsi are locked in a tense power struggle suffice, the most likely answer why



ethnicity is intense and violent in some countries and not in others may be attributed to a number of inter-related issues. Possible explanations pivot on issues such as (i) the balance between economic and political control; (ii) the character of ethnic demands, interest articulation; (iii) the form of governance system which either promotes centralization or degree of decentralization of government structures; and (iv) the extent of legitimacy of the ethnicity and quality of management. Politically, the demise of colonial rule in the late 1950's saw the intense rivalry among the emerging elites who found the ethnic weapon most expedient in the competition for political and state power. This rivalry continues with greater intensity following the wave of modernization and the globalization process which impacts on the country, economically, scientifically, technologically and industrially deficient, and weak in many aspects.

Cameroon's efforts towards what Huntington calls the "third wave" began perhaps with the departure of Ahidjo in November 1982. Paul Biya's accession to the supreme magistracy on 6 November 1982 signalled a new wave for democratic changes particularly with the slogan of rigor, moralization and democratization as forms of symbolic participation, regular elections and the political devices, reinforcing the ideologies of the government as true representatives of the people. The publication of Communal Liberalism in 1987 by Paul Biya was well ahead of the virus that caught the nations behind Soviet Union's domination.

The essence of democracy is that the governed decides who governs through a free and fair election. Thus the citizen is vested with the inalienable rights of choosing and dismissing the government (see Lewis 1985:61-63). Is this the situation in Cameroon? Categorically no. The rights of Cameroon citizens electing and dismissing their law-makers was abrogated in September 1966 following the establishment of a single party which at no time tolerated any form of divergent political opinions.

The reinstitution of political pluralism in 1990 following the formation of the Social democratic Front (SDF) brought Cameroon one step towards the creation of a democratic polity. Paul Biya (1987) gave green lights in that direction with a plurality of candidates competing for parliamentary candidacy nomination within his ruling Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPOM). However, the ideal of the New Deal regime crumbled along the way due to a number of inter-related factors - internal and external in character.

Internally, the politics of exclusion and ethnic hegemony had overtaken the principles of national unity and thus destroying the underlying elements of national cohesion and sense of belonging. Secondly and flowing from the establishment of ethnic hegemony over the rest of the society by the Beti



group, was the institutionalization of corruption and mismanagement with moral ethics and values destroyed. That the economy of the country took a nose dive was not surprising as civil society lost its sense of touch and as custodian of the rights of the people. A state of the survival of the fittest and fattening of these who wielded power from state coffers was established.

Externally, Cameroon's declining economy and state of mismanagement paved the way for the impositions of economic measures by the Bretton Woods Financial Institutions through the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) which only brought serious hardship to an already abject poverty ridden society. Many see SAP as socially added problems depicting the state of poverty in the society. It is evidently clear that the one-party system did minimize to a large extent ethnic conflict and confrontation Bama (1990: 11) asserts that "during the past five years, the democratization process, added by an ailing economy, has torn my country into pieces. Both ethnic and socio-cultural cleavages, which were buried in the fear of the one-party state have suddenly reappeared with much menacing force that the very foundation of my country's nationhood is today in serious jeopardy.'

To a large extent, the single - party had a significant impact restraining ethnic rivalry in a situation where the country's bewildering diversity in respect to geopolitics, social cultural, religious, economic and ethnic composition and diversity is concerned. The potential resources base of Cameroon's 230 or more ethnic constellation was mobilized and geared towards the common goal of national development weaknesses of certain ethnic groups was subdued. What mattered was the total prosperity of the nation. But behind that expected prosperity lay the ingenuity, strength and risk-taking attitude of certain ethnic groups (Lema Forje 1993). Here the Bamileke excel as a vibrant hard-working and economy risk taking ethnic group. Their ingenuity has not been properly exploited by the government for the benefit of the country. A number of authors (Mentan 1997, Lewis 1958 and others) draw attention to the fact that Cameroonian indigenous ethnic groups have emerged as significant elements in the political division of the country. In other words, ethnic constellation have equally adopted some form of affinity with political parties, interest groups and so on, as well as they are limited to occupational categories and job allocation. This is why individuals have been aligned and/or mobilized on ethnic strata for political ends.

Within this parenthesis, Akinsola (1964) looks at the mobilization process as a set of patterned responses, adaptive adjustments to the unanticipated consequences of the process of nation-building". This ethnic diversity should be seen as an asset not a liability to nation-building and the socioeconomic transformation of the society. Here Skinner (1967: 173) observation is that

“the central function of ethnic affiliations is to permit people to organize into social, cultural or political entities able to compete with others for whatever goods and services viewed as valuable in their environment.” Behind ethnic reality lies also ethnic conflicts propelled by many and varied factors.

In the case of Cameroon as noted by Mentan (1997: 38) competitive attitude and behaviour has been pitched between the depoliticization of the masses which constitutes the politics of the ruling class and the politicization, radicalization and militarization of ethnic groups by the threatened ruling class, and the opposition in the wings. This constitutes a serious dilemma in the state - civil society relationship in the democratization building process in Cameroon.

For example, the indigenizing of the bureaucracy and the marginalization of certain ethnic groups or province has made ethnic confrontation inevitable in Cameroon. This also has a spill over effect on the democratization process. Kasfir (1976:51) asserts, “Once ethnicity becomes a salient factor in politics, people increase its intensity by adopting ethnic explanation of succeeding events. Ethnicity then becomes self -fulfilling prophecy.”

### **Economic and Political Factors**

The reinstitution of political pluralism in 1990 exacerbated ethnic animosity and political warfare between those advocating for change and those determined to retain the existing status quo of a monolithic political system, ethnic hegemony and elitism. A state of dual contest exists within the society. One between the Anglophone and francophone. The other between Centre and South Provinces (Beti) and the rest of the society. The Anglophone Francophone issue is a long standing one that has taken the connotation of secession and assimilation. This is more compounding because democratization is taking place at the same time that the country is experiencing a serious and unprecedented economic crises and recession, mismanagement and corruption, total loss of confidence on the administration, and a functioning regime whose legitimacy and credibility is seriously questioned. At least three pertinent factors seem to dominate the political agenda of democratization and economic restructuring process, namely; (i) governance and competition for state power; (ii) minority nationalism; and (iii) competition for scarce resources.

## Governance and Competition for Power

The issue of democratic governance has roots in colonial legacy in respect of the kind of governance bequeathed by the departing colonial master to their respective colonies. The two inherited colonial governance form pivoted on the politics of “indirect rule” and the politics of “assimilation”. The two systems transcends into a contest and representing “federalism” and “centralism” -a system cherished by the Anglophone and francophone communities respectively. However, reunification gave the centralized system a stronger edge in the governance system as well as it contributed to serious maladministrative practices. The virtues of indirect rule are yet to be grasped by francophones.

Analytically, ethnic conflict was produced more by the state’s threatening actions regarding the various communities which sustained people’s lives than by an intrinsic hostility among the Cameroon people (see Bates 1981; Chazan 1983). In addition, since the reunification of the two Cameroon, and particularly following the abolition of the pluralistic political party structure and federal system (1972), the centralization of production and distribution of resources, patronage and privileges has become an object of fierce competition among the various ethnic and interest groups. The situation has grown worse since the abortive coup of April 1984, when the new governing ethnic hegemony desperate to create a material base, the emergent bourgeoisie turned on the state in a process of primitive capital accumulation; see (Ake 1978, 1981). People of the ethnic group of the former president were hunted, molested and killed or what is known as “la chasse aux Haussas” (see Ministry of Culture 1984: 1 0). The massacre of northerners by southerners creates a North-South cleavage which though is forgiven but not forgotten within the political dimensions of the process of democratization and the sustain ability of democratic institutions in the country. Both Takougang (1997:169) and the (Cameroon Post (February 24 - March 3 1994) report that;” since the advent of multi-parties politics in Cameroon, many citizens who have dared to take sides with opposition political parties have always had it rough from the CPOM or ROPC government or the so call presidential majority who are doing everything to stay in power. it has not only been a mere arrests and torture with flimsy or no explanation at all, but also deaths, a situation which has forced many Cameroonians to flee the country to strange land for safety.

Was Biya’s “New Deal Package” as exposed at the 1985 CNU-CPOM Bamenda Congress, and his 1987 vision of liberalization as well as the call for rigor, integrity and moralization in the conduct of all state affairs and private sector activities just one of those ploys of individual self -enrichment and a

disguised obstacle to freedom and democracy in Cameroon or what? Events after show that Biya's political reforms were more symbolic than real. Apparently in the late 1980s he continued to resist calls for the introduction of multiparty party democracy in Cameroon even though he encouraged competition within his CPDM Party, but opposed demands by Cameroonians for the creation of a functional multiparty system, describing this as simply a **'distasteful passing fetish'**. (Simpson 1991:653). Like most African leaders, Biya perceived political party pluralism both as threat to his authority and as a politically divisive factor detrimental to social and economic development. The argument advanced by Biya was that:

*the one party system appears to be the only suitable institutional framework for bringing together Cameroonians of all origins. It should therefore, give birth to a new brand of Cameroonians devoid of any tribal or regional allegiances. It is necessary for the mobilization of human resources, especially intellectual resources, which though so invaluable, are still in our country. For how could we ensure the efficient running of the state machinery if the political leanings of the few senior officials Cameroon now has were to torn between several opposition parties, thus creating for any ruling regime an insurmountable crisis of power? (ESSTI 1987:44).*

Given Cameroon's fragile political institutions, the silence of civil society, and the weak national political cultures, and backed with the newly emerged ethnic hegemony, the state was quickly transformed by the new political constellation into an instrument for pursuing personal, ethnic and other sectional interests at the expense of national and other groups' interests. Thus the democratization process is often thwarted and captured by ethnic hegemony and an apparent ganging up process by individuals who continue to benefit from the existing spoiled governance system, or by an ethnic group that has succeeded to seize control over the centralized state. The danger of dominance of the Beti hegemony and the ruling CPDM (RDPC in French) party remains foretold.

Cameroon has so far been spared the agony and dilemmas of civil war caused by the ethnicization of state power. But the ethnicization of state power under a monolithic party system enhanced an authoritarian regime to successfully clamp down on the opposition, oppressed and silenced civil society either through marginalization or co-optation. Civil Society is both weak and captive.

## Minority Nationalism

Cameroon is characterized by a number of minority nationalistic tendencies. To begin with there is the Anglophone- francophone divide. In respect of nationalism, the minority Anglophone have stood at the forefront of the struggle for the democratization of the country. Their strong believe in federalism and good governance has much to do with the kind of colonial system instituted by the British. Within the new political constellation of the country Anglophone as a minority group has been marginalized and oppressed. In contrast to the Anglophones, the Beti (who can be considered as a minority group vis-a-vis the rest of the population) wield sufficient power and now feel as constituted relevant claimants groups to power and privileges within the society.

One point deducible from the discussion above, the two groups show that the Beti have emerged as a **circumstantial powerful minority** group opposed to any form of political liberalization and the Anglophone community a marginalized and oppressed group dedicate to democratic change and good governance . Generally, where minorities find no channels for expressing their grievances, they often pursue violent, underground means of seeking justice. In some cases, they become separatist The Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) is a typical example.

This is not the case with the Anglophone community. Their quest for a return to federalism (and the secessionist aspiration) is carried out within the frame work of non- violence and within the principles of the constitutional democratic ideals. Equally interesting is the fact that some Anglophones (South West in particular) have not construed the concept of democratic transition and federalism based on the principles of the rich oil wealth and other natural resources in this part of Cameroon to assert their right to better treatment within the existing discriminative centralized system, but because of their inherent belief in the nation - state of Cameroon under democratic rule and governance. The National Oil Company (SONARA) located in the Southwest is manned by Bassas from the Littoral province.

The violence attitude of the beti minority group is due to the fear of losing existing privileged position in the society that genuine constitutional democratic changes is bound to usher. It is not surprising why at the start of Cameroon third wave to democratization, the Beti (centre and South provinces) expressed alignment with their kin and kith in Central African Republic, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea in what they envisaged as a “Fang” State. The commonness of language and culture being a motivating factor.

It should be noted that ethnicity is instigated and intensified by competition for control of state power which is necessary for attaining desirable goals of development. The Anglophone differ with the francophone on this point. For the francophone any move by the Anglophone for democratic change is generally perceived as a movement towards the capturing and control of state power by the later. But the intention of the Anglophone community and those francophones, who have come realize the values of democratic governance, is to ensure social and economic justice, rule of law and the sustainability of the country. Their overall intention is not to capture the control of State power for the Anglophones to ensure the practice and sustainability of democratic governance for the country, through a democratically elected government which could either be a one party controlled or a multiplicity of parties in a union government.

### **Competition for scarce Resources**

Competition for scarce resources constitutes a major avenue for ethnic conflict as well as it thwarts the transition to democratic governance. The situation in Cameroon is that the integration of different groups through colonialism into a peripheral capitalist formation brought new competitive notions of development as well as it heightened existing conflicts and produced new ones amongst the groups (see Melson and Wolp 1970).

The position taken by Kirk-Greene, (1980) concerning the indigenization of organs of government and even within the private society, notably in the armed forces including the police and prison warders, holds true of Cameroon. The indigenization of the civil service in Cameroon particularly since 1984 is total. Even if one should see this a fatal legacy of colonialism (the use of available human power and capacity to ensure colonial administration), this attitude by subsequent Cameroonian administration has continued to affect inter - ethnic relations especially because of the rampant abuse of power government officials to fill positions with their kinsfolk.

Specifically, structured inequalities abound among groups can be identified in the Cameroon society as the main bases for retarding the democratization process and promoting ethnic conflicts. Appointments to key administration posts within the government and influential managerial positions in parastatals and even in the private sector is indicative of what Adam (1971 :21 - 22) sees as the “result of efforts by underprivileged groups to preserve the privileges they enjoy by exploiting subjected groups.” Table 1 shows how the Beti being a minority population in comparison to the rest of the society exploit both the



competition for state power and scarce resources by virtue of one of them wielding power to their advantage (Onomo 1997: 102).

### **Responsables d'Entreprises Publiques et Parapubliques**

| <b>Regions</b>    | <b>Director Generals %</b> | <b>Assistant Director Generals %</b> | <b>Total %</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Centre-sud</b> | 37.68                      | 40.74                                | 38.71          |
| <b>Grand-Nord</b> | 6.6                        | 3.70                                 | 5.38           |
| <b>Anglophone</b> | 12.12                      | 7.41                                 | 10.75          |
| <b>Ouest</b>      | 16.67                      | 22.22                                | 18.28          |
| <b>Littoral</b>   | 7.58                       | 18.52                                | 10.75          |
| <b>Est</b>        | 1.52                       | 7.41                                 | 1.08           |
| <b>Expatriés</b>  | 18.18                      | 7.41                                 | 15.5           |

Source: Onomo (1997:102)

Note. Centre-Sud provinces are inhabited by the Beti.

The Cameroon state has been under serious pressure as a result of the government's failed promises, and of not matching words with action or doing so but in the opposite direction. The unfair distribution of posts and resources as indicated on Table 1 is indicative that the process of building a democratic and economically viable society is of course in Cameroon. Apparently, Communal Liberalism raised the hopes of many Cameroonians, but never satisfied their aspirations of living in a state of freedom, dignity, justice, and respect of human rights and with a sense of rigour in the appropriate and sustainable management of the resources of the nation. It became clear that communal solidarity, national unity and a sense of belonging had been converted into ethnic hatred and assassinations, the so called "come-no-go" phenomenon, the hatred of the Anglophones and Bamilekes by the Betis that gripped the country as wild fire, and with moral rectitude reduced into moral decadence portrayed Cameroon as a nation evolving under a state of painful nightmare. Instead of quality management, the virus of corruption and maladministration gripped the country.

Unfortunately, nothing was done on the part of nation's leadership to address the malaise that had gripped the nation nor implement into concrete terms vital strategic watchwords as "internal dialogue, the free exchange of ideas, tolerance of opinion, promotion of our national culture, the local economy and social justice" as propounded in the slogan of the New Deal Government (Cameroon Post August 12- 19, 1991). Sad enough, for many Cameroonians, by the late 1980s, Biya's early welcome reforms strategic approach under what was known as "the New Deal" governance style was by all standard nothing short of "consolidating" total power and fanning ethnic



hegemony and divide within the Cameroon polity. Instead of participatory democracy, Guided democracy becomes the secret weapon for change. Political change was guided and dictated by the pace that made it more comfortable for the ruling elites to derail the democratization wagon started in 1990.

Failed promises and the illusion of democratic reform worked in favour of two groups, namely the francophone against the Anglophone, and, Beti against the society. Furthermore, derailing the democratic process added to economic recession and the total collapse of the state thereby prompting the restructuring policy strategy imposed by the Bretton Wood Financial Institutions on Cameroon. The outcome is well noted by Osaghae (1994:22-23) that “although economic restructuring has in some cases preceded independently of democratization, the realization by the people that economic power is the basis of political power has made conflicts over scarce resources an integral part of democratization. In many countries, democratization afforded marginalized, disadvantaged and oppressed groups opportunities to finally seek economic redress. The process of doing so in the face of serious economic recession and deprivation intensified conflict over control of state power and other resources.”

So far, the politics of democratization and ethnicity in Cameroon remains a complicated one. Each transition toward democracy has its own unique characteristics. It is left for each country to develop these characteristics towards the achievement of democratic governance and good management. What has been characteristic of Cameroon could be X-rayed under the following factors: guided and restricted democracies; frail and unconsolidated democracies; democracies plagued by acute social and economic problems.

### **Process to Transition and Consolidation**

From the foregoing discussions, the condition unity and the process of transition from authoritarian or non-democratic rule to democracy in Cameroon has been crowded with a number of phases that overlap. So far, the country is still within phase one - **the preparatory phase** characterized by a political struggle leading to the breakdown of the non-democratic order and regime and ethnic conflict: The other phases of significant importance which the country has yet to roll through is that of the **“decision phase”** which should institute clear-cut elements of a democratic order and the final state, that of **“the consolidated phase”** where the new democracy is further developed and, eventually, democratic practices finally established as an inherent part of the political culture of the country. There is no historical law

that can best define the transition process as a natural order of things. Each country has to map out its own path through the uneasy seesaw between authoritarian and consolidated democracy. Anything short of consolidated democracy is unaccepted for a country like Cameroon within a very challenging and rapidly changing global system.

As of present, democracy in Cameroon has been under the tutelage of “guided or restricted democracy” with the Head of State and his ruling CPOM dictating the pace under very careful guided and controlled strategic system of manipulating a divided opposition and coerced civil society that limits competition, participation and the liberties of the people. The ruling CPOM has taken it as rule and right to interfere in the democratic process in order to protect its interests even in the wake of total loss of confidence in the administration which is seen as not having the legitimacy and consent of people. The true results of the 1992 Presidential, 1996 Local Council and the 1997 Parliamentary elections depict this.

The manipulation of the 1991 Tripartite Accord to establish a concerted constitutional framework for the country show the kind of manipulative machinery the government had created to frustrate any positive movements towards the consolidation of democratic governance and good management in Cameroon. Frail, unconsolidated democracies in Africa are a common phenomenon because the anvil on which democracy should be construed in terms of the existing institutions of state and their positions in society remains extremely weak and fragile. In the case of Cameroon, the state has failed woefully both economically and politically. This is very sad as Cameroon was once looked upon as the emerging political laboratory for Africa following the peaceful reunification of the British and French administered United Nations Trust-territories.

In general, Cameroonians are poverty ridden today, if not far worse as they were thirty years ago. For the Anglophone community, they are worse of more than in the 1950s. Cameroon like a number of African countries has failed to effectively institutionalize any form of effective democratic rule and good management. Rather they excel in authoritarian regime form. What can be the possible problem. Most outstanding among many possible plausible answers is that the total lack of legitimacy characterizing most of these governments. The case of Cameroon remains crystal clear to the extent that the leader of the SOF, Ni John Fru Ndi has openly called upon the French (the political broker and space setter for political Changes in Cameroon) to intervene in the country’s political impasse (Ndifor 1999: 1 - 2 and Ni John Fru Ndi 1999: 11 - 12).

Secondly, the departure of the colonial masters created a vacuum in the political system which unfortunately was filled by a form of neo-patrimonialistic regime structure. This has been described by max Weber as a type of governance originating from a royal dynasty and which rather treats matters of state as a personal affair. The governance system in Cameroon since reunification in 1961 has been one of personal rule and could therefore be interpreted as neo-patrimonialism. This personal rule has intensified and received greater impetus and impact since 1984. The coming into being of advanced communication and information technology has contributed to this form of personal rule based on personal royalty especially toward the strong man -the head of state- who now controls both the competition for state power and competition for scarce resources. In all key positions and important appointments in the civil service and armed forces are filled with the loyal followers clans folk, friends, relatives, and ethnic groups of the man at the helm of the state magistracy. In return, the loyalty of persons to the strongman (Head of state) is reinforced by their sharing of the spoils of office.

Significant here also is the fact that the head of state commands a web of informal networks or patron -client relationships through which the spoils of office are distributed. The greatest beneficiaries here are first and foremost kinsmen, hence the Beti hegemony within the body polity of the country, like the Hausa hegemony during the days of Ahidjo though that was not as pronounced and discriminative as what exists today. Comparatively, the distribution of resources attained some degree of fairness than now. Whichever way, personal rule and patron client relationship remains an important factor within the body politic of Cameroon and many other African nations.

What is significant to observe here are two factors, “belly politics” and the institutionalization and mystification of the strongman as the embodiment of national purpose and around whom everything must evolve. Given the Cameroon situation, the President is above and apart from the civil society. He can do whatever pleases him without a reprimand from the constitutional legalized institutions of government and the state. The financial coffers of the state remain his personal property and at no time accountable to anyone in society. It is within his prerogative to change at will the constitution, all depending on his night dreams and the influence of his spouse or phone call from the external custodian of the country amongst others. With a flick of his head, the citizen can be disposed or done away like that. This embodiment of absolute power in personality is traceable to the interview given by the head of state, President Paul Biya to Eric Chinje (CRTV 1987).

This absolute control of the state's machinery impedes any form of democratic rule. But enhances the avenues for corruption and of mismanagement through illegal access to the state's resources in the form of job contracts. Favourable loans, opportunity for illegal gain, and access to resources not directly controlled by the state but subject to state regulation, such as import permit and business licenses (Sorenson, 1993). The collapse of Credit Agricole Bank being a typical example amongst many such inappropriate business activities under the new deal regime.

As a result of the state's lack of legitimacy, and in view of the fact that many Cameroonians are excluded from the rewards and benefits emanating from clientelism, the government resort to coercion or threat of it for survival. In determining the degree of democracy and ethnicity in Cameroon and in many African states, one should perhaps focus less on the differences between civilian and military regimes and more on the direct and indirect political influence on the arm forces (Collier, 1975:22). Since reunification one can rightly conclude that the democratization process in Cameroon is best x-rayed by "the study of the collapse of the tutelary democratic regimes introduced during the decolonialization and the emergence of various types of authoritarian regime form and leadership style - Ahidjo and Biya.

Cameroon's transition to democratic governance is confronted with serious economic and social problems. Since mid-1980, Cameroon has been subjected to its own lost decade - with declining living standards and increased poverty for the vast majority of the marginalized poor. It will take some time for the country to recover from its current economic and social decline. Thus, the country's democratization process is plagued by acute social and economic problems with no sign for solutions and since room is not created for popular mobilization and participation of the masses in the process of change and development.

Cameroon's has been subjected to its own lost decade - with declining living standards and increased poverty for the vast majority of the marginalized poor. It will take some time for the country to recover from its current economic and social decline. Thus the country's democratization process is plagued by acute social and economic problems with no sign for solutions and since room is not created for popular mobilization partnership and participation of the masses in the process of change and development. A new form of social movement and popular mobilization is necessary to inject new ideological coherence, vision and structuring of the system is imperative otherwise the country has no chance of positively surviving in the new millennium. New forms of ethnic conflict management should be put in place to better handle arising issues that thwart the democratization process.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Cameroon's approach towards the third wave of democratization is indicative of the fact that single factor is accountable for the contemporary surge and quest for democratic governance and good management. Above all, that the country has yet to articulate and aggregate strategic policy measures for ethnic conflict management as it impacts on the democratization and Socio-economic, technological and industrial process.

In addressing these issues, there is an urgent need to unravel Cameroon's specific problems some of which have been addressed here and better summarized as the "preparatory stage" characterized by a political struggle which can either lead to a break down or step forward in the democratic third wave. In this preparatory stage, the breakdown of the non-democratic regime has still not yet occurred. Until this breakdown or collapse takes place, the country cannot move forward to the second stage - "the decision phase" where clear cut decisions are made to establish a solid platform for democratic order.

The attempt by civil society and the constructive opposition parties - the SDF for example, has been to create a process of comprehensive and concerted bases for the breakdown of existing non-democratic regime form in Cameroon. For some time, civil society has been active in that process. However, civil society has equally been caught or gripped by the "frustration shock phenomenon" that compromises its continued efforts towards change. The vision of an all -powerful Head of State and coercive mechanisms put in place has also been responsible for the frustration shock that has gripped civil society.

The non-democratic regime form that the country has since the reunification of the two Cameroons did pregnant civil society with spoil attitudes hence the state of frustration. Civil society has yet to overcome that stage of shock. Cameroon civil society has yet to give birth to the pregnancy of non-democratic governance style. Secondly Cameroon should move from its present nation-state practice to city-state governance from where each city builds and operates on the basis of autonomy and independent strategy as a possible way of addressing ethnicity and transcending the ethnic boundary if the nation-state has to survive and make its impact as a governance structure for the country.

So far, the typical pattern confronting Cameroon is that of an established uneasy fluctuation between authoritarianism and frail democracy. Under the Biya regime, there is an expanded form of restricted or guided democracy that is frail, unconsolidated and plagued by acute social, economic and

management problems. What seems to paint a more optimistic democratization process and ethnic conflict management picture in the hope created out of frustrating state of affairs by mobilizing and organizing civil society (grass roots) in the struggle for democratization. The Cameroon civil society is better informed today than before 26 May 1990.

But this hope born out of the frustration runs a further risk of sinking into serious apathy if the economic and social conditions of the people are not drastically improved. The present state of economic and social crisis impedes a smooth passage of the democratization process. There is a long - way to attaining consolidated democracy in Cameroon.

The ultimate search for democratization and in managing ethnic conflicts in Cameroon is for the country to drastically reduce the sole formation and dependence of political parties on a particular ethnic group (particularly that of the leader) to build a national political base and bridges across ethnic boundaries and social strata in the society. Such a search can only be produced within the framework of social justice, the rule of law and respect for human dignity as well as economic and political deregulation, for the state to relinquish much of its control of the political and economic machinery.

The current dilemmas of the process of democratization rest mostly on the shoulders of Cameroonian, who must take the first step towards breaking the basis of a non- democratic regime form that characterized the country for four decades; industrial and technological awakening of the country and to build a culture vital for the sustainable development of the country.

## **Recommendations**

1. Civil society has to reassert itself in the process of change and development and to remain an active participant in the democratization and economic recovery processes;
2. Increased participation and empowerment of the poor constitute an important factor in a process of democratization where a sense of belonging not alienation must be cultivated;
3. Civil society must learn to take its own share of responsibility and to contribute positively towards the emergence of a conducive environment for the consolidated stage to take place;
4. There is a serious but imperative need toward greater political, cultural and economic empowerment of the poor, underprivileged and marginalized in society.
5. Recognition of the existence of minorities not as a liability but as an asset to the overall wellbeing of the nation;



6. Limit the powers of majority rule with a focus on respect for minority rights, participation and responsibility. The minority should not establish itself as a tyranny in society either. Majority opinion must also be respected and never used as a tyrannical mechanism for development;

7. The need to develop accommodative practices and political parties should not be made coercive instruments in the hands of bureaucrats.

8. The separation of powers amongst the three institutions of government being essential for the growth and sustainability of democratic governance;

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## Gender Equality, Women's Power and Health Reproduction

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### Introduction

Les réflexions sur le processus de développement accordent de plus en plus une place prépondérante aux femmes et dénoncent les discriminations dont elles font l'objet. S'il est vrai que les femmes manquent de pouvoir dans presque toutes les sociétés, il est aussi vrai que la quasi-totalité d'entre elles sont naturellement dotées d'un puissant pouvoir: celui de la reproduction. Mais le processus de gestion, d'entretien de celui-ci cause souvent des ennuis à bon nombre d'entre elles: polygynie, mutilations sexuelles, mariages précoces, accouchement difficiles ou rapprochés, etc. Dans ce processus en effet se trouvent en confrontation, différents acteurs (hommes/femmes, adultes/jeunes...) ou les relations profitent rarement aux femmes et aux plus jeunes. Pour corriger cet état de choses, deux concepts focalisent aujourd'hui l'attention: genre et sante de la reproduction. Ces concepts ont pour finalités de lutter contre les inégalités et de permettre aux femmes de gérer autrement leur corps, leur maternité, dans la perspective d'un développement humain durable. Ils constituent l'ossature de la présente communication qu'il sera exposés en 3 points:

- Concept de genre
- Concept de santé reproductive
- Les perspectives.

### Concept De "Genre" Essai De Définition Et Caractéristiques

- 1) Genre en tant que concept social
  - 2) Genre en tant qu'approche
  - 3) Genre instrument et cadre d'analyse.
  - 4) Genre et principes fondamentaux.
- Durabilité
  - Participation
  - Equité / Egalite

-L'octroi du pouvoir (empowerment)

### **Genre en tant que concept social**

D'entrée de jeu, il faut distinguer le sexe du genre.

Le mot sexe a une signification biologique tandis que le mot genre définit les rôles sociaux qu'une société attribue à l'homme et à la femme, à la petite fille, au petit garçon.

Et comme le précise bien Anne Zwahlen, il faut établir une distinction entre le sexe biologique et le sexe social.

Le sens commun a tendance à considérer depuis des siècles, la répartition des rôles entre hommes et femmes comme naturellement prédéterminés, inaltérable par les différences biologiques ou divinement décrétées. Il va donc de soi que les différences sociales s'enracinent dans les différences biologiques. Ces caractéristiques incluent à la fois les idées et les valeurs considérées comme étant féminines ou masculines (les femmes sont très émotives, les hommes rationnels). Il s'ensuit un ensemble de comportements, d'aptitudes et de pratiques (les femmes font la vaisselle; les hommes travaillent avec des machines).

En fait, au-delà de la capacité des femmes à mettre au monde et celle des hommes à féconder tout est socialement et culturellement construit donc susceptible de se modifier et de se réinterpréter. Autrement dit et plus explicitement, même avant la décennie de la femme (1985), les recherches interculturelles ont révélé que ces caractéristiques loin d'être prédéterminées ou naturelles, sont plutôt engendrées et créées de toute pièce par la société, c'est du construit social. En conséquence, les conditions de vie quotidiennes des femmes et des hommes, leur statut sont enracinés dans des institutions et cadres socio-culturel, politique et économiques données.

En focalisant davantage des réflexions sur le genre, Anne Zwahlen (1996) insiste sur une mise en évidence des relations, des articulations entre hommes et femmes, l'idée du féminin et du masculin.

Avec l'idée du genre, on évite de considérer de manière séparée, exclusive, soit les hommes soit les femmes. La situation respective des uns et des autres ne peut se comprendre que par rapport à l'autre sexe et qu'une fonction des structures de vie dans lesquelles chaque individu est inséré.

Mais en mettant l'accent sur les relations, et les articulations entre ce qui est considéré comme féminin ou masculin, on met rarement en évidence des équilibres ou des symétries. Car, au contraire, ce sont des hiérarchies et des valorisations différentes des sexes qui apparaissent et l'on s'aperçoit très vite que l'apport féminin à la vie d'une société est sous-estimé voire ignoré. La notion de pouvoir pris au sens large du terme est au cœur du concept.

## **La question du pouvoir**

La notion de pouvoir est souvent comprise comme le pouvoir sur quelqu'un. "Donner du pouvoir" selon le genre, c'est créer des conditions dans lesquelles, les catégories spécifiques, les pauvres par exemple, peuvent aussi combler leurs besoins quotidiens et participer à la définition et à la promotion de leurs propres projets sociaux et politiques. Pour répondre aux besoins pratiques: il urge donc d'accroître le pouvoir des groupes défavorisés et remettre en question la subordination systématique.

Les femmes étant généralement dans une position de défavorisée (féminisation de la pauvreté RNDH 1997) par rapport aux hommes, il se pose aussi une question d'équité l'égalité.

## **Equité / Egalite**

Il faut d'abord établir une différence entre équité et égalité.

Elisabeth McAllister dans (improving the status of women) 1990 donne l'exemple suivant:

*"On donne la même chance au renard et à la cigogne de prendre un repas dans un plat. Celui qui se nourrira davantage dépend en fait de la forme du plat: large et au profond pour accommoder la cigogne. Pour obtenir un impact équitable, chacun devrait pouvoir prendre sa part du repas dans son propre plat. "*

La question se pose de savoir:

- En matière de développement, voulons-nous l'égalité des chances ou l'équité de l'impact?
- Le genre en tant qu'approche peut nous donner quelque éclaircissement?

## **Genre en tant qu'approche**

A ce propos, Anne Zwahlen (1996) et Franz K. Monica (1998) trouvent le "genre" en tant qu'approche et aussi une philosophie, une vision qui nécessite IC; prise en compte des relations entre hommes et femmes comme l'une des perspectives importantes qui permet de comprendre l'ensemble d'une société et son fonctionnement.

C'est un angle de vue qui ne se contente pas d'éclairer les modes d'être et de faire des familles, des unités de production/consommation, mais qui traverse également toute l'organisation symbolique, sociale, politique et économique, comme l'a si bien dit le sociologue Pierre BOURDIEU: "c'est un principe de vision, de division et conséquemment de hiérarchisation qui oriente toutes les 'pensées d'action'".

Soulignons, par ailleurs, que ces relations varient d'une société à l'autre et d'une époque à l'autre. En Afrique, les différences entre les différents groupes qui composent la nation sont majeures.

En outre, dans la même région, et dans le même groupe, on peut aussi observer des différences entre les villages. Cela peut s'expliquer entre autres par les influences des leaders, etc.

Le genre en tant qu'approche est aussi une philosophie du développement qui, comme le stipule Frantz Fanon (1998):

- Est axée sur les notions d'Observation-participation et la notion d'analyse;
- Met l'accent sur les modes d'organisation notamment les sphères domestiques, économiques, politiques et culturelles;
- Descend jusqu'au niveau de l'unité familiale pour l'analyse des formes culturelles spécifiques d'inégalités et de hiérarchie sociale;
- Définit le développement comme processus complexe impliquant des changements socio-économiques, culturels visant à élever le niveau de vie et à satisfaire les besoins de l'ensemble des populations.

C'est une approche relationnelle qui met l'accent sur les rapports.

Au demeurant, le genre en tant qu'approche en tant qu'instrument et cadre d'analyse est fondé sur 4 principes fondamentaux.

Durabilité: Il faut penser aux jeunes générations futures d'où rapport Vieux/Jeune et gestion rationnelle des ressources disponibles.

Participatif: Met l'accent sur l'IPF (Indicateur de la Participation de la Femme) et sur la participation de l'homme au développement.

Équité / Égalité: Interpelle une société plus équitable où chacun à quelque niveau où il se trouve (familial, national, international) se sent à l'aise, sans contrainte ni subordination pour mieux participer au développement,

L'octroi du pouvoir (empowerment): pose le problème de pouvoir et surtout du pouvoir décisionnel des femmes et spécifiquement les conditions d'exercice du pouvoir des femmes et des hommes.

### **Santé reproductive**

«Par santé en matière de reproduction, on entend le bien-être physique, mental et social de la personne humaine "pour tout ce qui concerne l'appareil génital, ses fonctions et son fonctionnement... Elle vise à améliorer les relations interpersonnelles ... Cette dernière condition implique qu'homme et femme ont le droit d'être informés et d'utiliser la méthode de planification de leur choix ainsi que d'autres méthodes de régulation des naissances qui ne



soient pas contraires à la loi» (PNUD 1998). Mais le problème qui s'est toujours posé et se pose encore aujourd'hui est la menace qui pèse sur la santé reproductive des femmes: elles ont difficilement accès aux soins de santé, à la nutrition, à l'éducation et aux revenus. Leur statut social dans bien de pays les éloigne des arènes du pouvoir public.

Dans le cadre de la présente communication, l'accent est mis sur certains aspects de la santé reproductive des femmes à travers leur manifestation et les causes qui les génèrent.

### **Quelques obstacles à une bonne santé reproductive**

La description des faits liés aux mariages précoces, aux mutilations sexuelles, la valorisation de la descendance nombreuse et certaines conséquences qui y sont liées constituent l'ossature de cette rubrique.

Le mariage précoce persiste et s'amplifie dans nombre de pays: «le gouvernement d'Iran a récemment annulé le Code Civil de 1976 qui stipulait l'âge minimum de 18 ans et a introduit un nouveau minimum de 13 ans» (CIA, 1985, p. 8). L'âge minimum officiellement fixé dans plusieurs pays ne connaît une application effective que pour les couples qui s'unissent sans le consentement des parents. Les partenaires indépendants financièrement ou ayant été scolarisés arrivent à contourner l'autorité parentale. L'une des clés de voûte du mariage est le respect qu'inspirent encore les adultes et le pouvoir qu'ils détiennent sur les jeunes. La précocité du mariage pour les jeunes filles est caractéristique de l'Afrique. Il en est de même de l'écart d'âge important entre le premier mariage des hommes et des femmes. Cet écart est de 84 ans en Afrique de l'Ouest, la plaçant ainsi au premier rang des régions du monde où se pratique le mariage précoce (LOCOH, T; 1995). En République du Bénin, les données de l'UNICEF révèlent que les femmes entrent en union à un âge précoce: plus d'une femme sur deux est déjà mariée avant l'âge de 19 ans. La même institution fait constater qu'à cet âge (19 ans), 17,3% des femmes sont mariées contre seulement 2% d'hommes.

Des études menées dans plusieurs pays révèlent que les femmes immatures du point de vue physiologique et psychologique sont très exposées. Elles risquent près de trois fois que les femmes âgées de mourir de complications qui sont en effet plus fréquentes chez les adolescentes que les femmes plus âgées:

- l'hypertension usée à la grossesse peut conduire à une éclampsie (crise convulsive souvent suivie de coma frappant les femmes enceintes) souvent mortelle.

- la dystocie (difficulté de l'accouchement due à une anomalie mortelle ou fatale) peut entraîner une fistule vesicovaginale ou rectovaginale qui peut

être à la base de l'incontinence. Elle est souvent à l'origine de l'expulsion de'' la femme de son groupe d'adoption.

Quel que soit le statut de la femme, la maternité précoce restreint ses perspectives en matière d'éducation et d'emploi.

Les enfants issus de grossesses précoces sont exposés au risque de privations matérielles et affectives compte tenu des difficultés auxquelles sont confrontés leurs parents, les mères en l'occurrence. Ces dernières ploient sous le poids de charges excessives qui ne leur donnent pas toujours le temps de s'occuper convenablement des enfants ; l'immaturité des mères y est aussi pour beaucoup: les jeunes filles passent en effet très peu d'années entre enfance et responsabilités de mères et d'épouses.

Un autre aspect qui influence la santé reproductive de la femme est l'univers matrimonial au sein duquel elle évolue. La polygamie est l'option matrimoniale de choix en Afrique sub-saharienne. Ce cadre ne favorise pas souvent l'épanouissement de la femme. Celle-ci peut être négligée ou délaissée par le mari au profit d'une autre. Il prévaut alors une ambiance de mésentente et de conflit. Elle aboutit parfois à des ruptures d'union qui ouvrent la voie à la mobilité conjugale assez fréquents chez les femmes (LOCOH, 1995). Cette situation traduit souvent la recherche d'un équilibre psycho-affectif par la femme. Quel que soit le type de mariage, il y a un facteur culturel qui influence la santé reproductive de la femme: la propension à la descendance nombreuse. Les enquêtes démographiques le confirment: les indices synthétiques de fécondité varient en effet de 5 à 7 enfants environ selon les pays (LOCOH, 1995). Dans le cadre d'union polygamique, la valorisation de la descendance nombreuse développe chez les coépouses une logique de concurrence qui leur est préjudiciable de plusieurs points de vue. Et ce constat n'est pas spécifique aux femmes évoluant dans une union polygamique. Il faut cependant reconnaître que la volonté d'avoir beaucoup d'enfant est plus forte chez les hommes que chez les femmes: respectivement 43% et 21 % au Bénin (PNUD, 1998). Cette tendance à des répercussions négatives sur l'utilisation par les femmes des méthodes contraceptives modernes. Les maris s'opposent en effet aux précédés modernes de régulation de naissance. Une telle attitude ne permet pas à l'individu de mener une vie sexuelle responsable et hypothèque surtout la santé de la femme. L'Espérance de vie des femmes est certes plus longue que celles des hommes mais il a été constaté que les femmes ne tirent pratiquement aucun avantage de cet atout. Les femmes sont en effet «vieilles prématurément par les conditions de vie excessivement rigoureuses et par les inégalités dont elles sont victimes dès l'enfance. Une alimentation inappropriée, une mauvaise santé générique, des conditions de travail

dangereuses, la violence et les maladies en rapport avec le mode de vie, sont autant de facteurs qui accroissent les risques de cancer du sein et du col, d'ostéoporose et d'autres affections chroniques après la ménopause. Au cours de la vieillesse, la pauvreté, la solitude et l'aliénation sont des maux fréquents.» (OMS, 1998.8)

Au tableau des violences exercées à l'encontre de la femme, affectant sa santé reproductive, on peut aussi inscrire les mutilations sexuelles.

En République du Bénin, elles sont encore une réalité et se pratique surtout dans la région septentrionale du pays. Elles déstabilisent l'équilibre psycho-affectif de la femme. Pratique à double fonctions (social et culturel), les mutilations peuvent déboucher sur la frigidité féminine. Les femmes excisées souffrent souvent d'une série d'affections qui peuvent être graves comme la dyspareunie (rapports sexuels douloureux), l'incontinence urinaire ou des déchirures lors des accouchements. Les séquelles de cette pratique peuvent aller jusqu'à la stérilité. Quels peuvent être les facteurs explicatifs des faits décrits ci-dessus?

### **Eléments d'explication**

La sous-information des femmes est pour beaucoup dans les problèmes auxquels elles sont confrontées. Au plan éducationnel, le taux de scolarisation des filles (36,6%) est très inférieur à celui des garçons (61,42%). Dans le même ordre d'idée, il est à signaler que 35% des adolescentes sont sans instruction contre 3% qui ont atteint le niveau secondaire (EDSB, 1996). Cette variable a des conséquences sur l'entrée en mariage des femmes. L'âge moyen au mariage des analphabètes est de 16,7 ans alors que celui des femmes ayant atteint le niveau supérieur est de 26,5 ans (UNICEF, 1996).

De façon générale, divers aspects de la culture concourent à maintenir la femme dans un statut de dépendance. Cela s'explique par le fait que les femmes sont craintes à cause du pouvoir de reproduction dont elles sont dépositaires, d'où la nécessité de les contrôler. L'accès aux ressources de leur famille d'origine d'accueil ou d'alliance est par conséquent strictement surveillé. Les mutilations sexuelles sont aussi à situer dans cette perspective: elles viseraient entre autres à viriliser l'homme et à inhiber la sexualité des femmes. Les plus défavorisées semblent être les jeunes femmes. Elles sont dépendantes de la gent masculine de leur famille d'origine ou de celle de l'époux; elles le sont également des femmes aînées, des belles-mères en l'occurrence.

Il faut dire qu'au plan juridique, seul l'article 26 de la constitution béninoise reconnaît l'égalité de l'homme et de la femme en droit. Il n'existe pratiquement pas d'autres textes spécifiques à la protection des droits de la

femme. Cette situation paraît paradoxale lorsqu'on sait qu'au Bénin, les femmes représentent 51 % de la population totale. Elles constituent 33% des actifs agricoles, et plus de 90% d'entre elles sont actives dans le commerce. Seulement 25,81% d'entre elles sont salariées (MPREPE, 1996). Toujours est-il qu'elles mènent des activités génératrices de revenus; ce qui leur assure une relative autonomie financière, gage d'une autonomie plus grande. Force est cependant de reconnaître que malgré la percée des femmes dans le domaine économique, elles n'ont pas encore voix au chapitre sur le plan politique.

En résumé, lorsqu'on prend la femme comme élément analyseur, la santé reproductive peut être appréciée grâce à l'approche genre à plusieurs niveaux.

À la lumière de toutes les idées développées, l'on se rend compte que les femmes, n'ont pas assez de pouvoirs influents pour œuvrer à une santé reproductive saine. De ce point de vue, il est loisible de constater que les relations sont inégalitaires entre hommes et femmes, d'une part et entre les femmes de différents groupes d'âge, d'autre part. Ces dernières de façon générale, sont actives dans tous les domaines de l'économie et même dans le secteur informel. Les activités génératrices de revenus, même si elles éloignent parfois la femme du domaine conjugal ne les épargnent pas des tâches ménagères. Le surcroît d'activités n'est pas toujours bénéfique à la femme puisqu'elle s'investit beaucoup et ce travail lui profite rarement de façon directe.

Les conditions actuelles de vie semblent offrir d'heureuses perspectives pouvant favoriser la disparition des facteurs qui perpétuent les inégalités à la base d'une mauvaise santé reproductive.

### **Perspectives**

Une meilleure santé reproductive des femmes nécessite des actions à au moins trois niveaux: au niveau de l'Etat, au niveau des femmes elles-mêmes et au niveau des ONG.

Au niveau des pouvoirs publics, le rôle de l'Etat a été clairement spécifié par Rebecca COOK lorsqu'elle estime que: des traités internationaux relatifs aux droits de l'homme doivent être appliqués à l'échelle tant internationale que nationale aux fins d'assurer aux femmes la jouissance notamment des droits suivants:

- droit, par leur émancipation, d'être à l'abri de toutes les formes de discrimination et d'oppression;
- droit d'exercer leurs droits en matière de liberté et de sécurité, y compris la sécurité physique face par exemple, aux violences domestiques;
- droit d'avoir accès aux soins de santé et de l'éducation pour la santé", (COOK, 1998: 261).

En clair, l'auteur pense à juste titre, que pour mettre on couvre les droits de l'homme dans le cadre de la protection et de la promotion de la santé reproductive, les Etats se doivent de s'engager à respecter les conventions internationales sur les droits de l'homme.

Pour cela, ils doivent s'acquitter de trois types de devoirs: respecter les droits en ne les violant pas; protéger les droits en adoptant de mesures positives à l'encontre des tiers qui les violent; exercer les dits droits en recourant aux moyens gouvernementaux.

Ce rôle de l'Etat ne prendra toute son importance que si les femmes à la base s'organisent et dénoncent les abus dont elles font l'objet; si elles donnent à leurs enfants (garçons et filles) le même type d'éducation; si elles veillent à leur scolarisation; si elles se battent pour s'autonomiser financièrement. Ce n'est en effet pas le "laisser faire" qui viendrait à bout des discriminations dont elles font l'objet.

Mais entre l'Etat et chaque femme, il y a une fosse que doivent combiner les Organisations Non Gouvernementales. Ces dernières doivent par leurs actions, faire prendre conscience par les hommes et les femmes de l'importance de l'amélioration de la condition féminine. Elles doivent servir de relais entre les pouvoirs publics et la base. Par rapport aux mutilations génitales, par exemple, elles peuvent identifier et initier les exciseuses a des activités génératrices de revenu. Certaines d'entre elles promeuvent déjà la scolarisation des filles mais les taux de scolarisation des filles sent encore faibles en Afrique, d'où la nécessité de multiplier les efforts. Au niveau des soins de santé primaire, une expérience au Pakistan peut servir d'exemple. Des villageoises ont été recrutées, formées et appuyées par des comités sanitaires. Grace aux visites à domicile, elles nouent des liens étroits avec les mères de famille augmentant ainsi leur chance de survie ainsi que celle de leurs enfants Ces agents de sante féminine mobiles promeuvent mieux les soins de santé primaire parce que leurs prestations sent plus adaptées aux besoins des populations que celles des installations fixes. C'est là, une piste que les ONG faisant de la sante leur préoccupation, peuvent explorer et adapter aux réalités de leurs zones d'action.

La liste des actions à mener est encore longue mais il y a des signes encourageants les migrations, la scolarisation plus longue des jeunes en ville, l'apparition dans l'imaginaire collectif de nouveaux modèles véhiculés par les medias sent des facteurs de changement dans le domaine de la nuptialité. Les femmes investissent de plus en plus l'arène politique et occupent des postes stratégiques de décision. Au Benin, le Ministre de la Sante et celui du Commerce sont actuellement confies a des femmes; le Ministère de la Protection Sociale et de la Condition Féminine vient d'être créé et est dirigé

par une femme. De même, le taux de scolarisation des filles s'améliorent (même s'il est encore faible).

En somme, les perspectives sent heureuses et la santé reproductive ira mieux, si chaque catégorie d'acteurs sus-énumérée joue sa partition.

### **Conclusion**

La sante de la reproduction vise le bien-être des populations a plusieurs points de vue, tandis que le genre se présente a la fois comme l'outil théorique et méthodologique pouvant permettre d'explorer la réalité sociale en vue d'identifier les inégalités sociales. Celles-ci constituent souvent un frein au développement. Les deux concepts sont par conséquent complémentaires. Leur mise en rapport par l'intermédiaire de la femme, dans le contexte actuel caractérise par la modernité, a permis de se rendre compte que d'heureuses perspectives s'offrent à elle. “ Lui reste de ne pas refuser de se battre pour faire prévaloir ses droits. Y est-elle préparée?

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## Beyond Pregnancy and Reproduction: Cultural Socio-Economic and Behavioural Determinants of Women's Health in Developing Countries

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### Abstract

*Health, a basic human right that is vital to sustainable development eludes the majority of women. Although women in most societies live longer than men (for biological reasons) women often suffer greater burdens of illness and disability than their male counterparts. While there are inequalities in health in both developing and industrialized countries, the disparities are more pronounced in developing nations. In the past, when women's health has received attention, reproductive health and women's health have been treated in general as if conterminous, and more concern has been focused on children resulting from pregnancy than on women themselves. The extent to which women's health and wellbeing affect perinatal and infant mortality for example, has been a key focal point. In the area of AIDS research, most early studies on women were largely restricted to preventing transmission of HIV from an infected mother to her child, and women themselves were neglected from the beginning of the epidemic. It is noteworthy that focus on women during discussions of family planning and contraception has had more to do with containing population growth than enhancing the health and wellbeing of women. This domain's concerns have been the need to curtail high birth rates and control population growth rather than concern with women's health as an end in itself. Ultimately, there is need for a deconstruction of the ideology that women's sole natural destiny is to fulfil the "biological role of procreation". Women must be seen as human beings with needs and desires that relate to them personally.*

### Gender Inequities in Health

As a result of visible and invisible discrimination, subordination, and undervaluation experienced throughout life, women are more vulnerable to poverty, poor nutrition, preventable diseases, uncontrolled fertility, premature death, violence, disability, alienation and loneliness. The quality of women's lives is further impaired by insufficient education, poor housing and sanitation,

long hours of work in physically demanding and often dangerous conditions, inadequate and inaccessible health care services, and lack of family and community support. According to Dawitt (1994):

*“harmful cultural practices perpetuated on women and girls... include child marriage and early pregnancy, forced feeding before a wedding, nutritional taboos, particularly during pregnancy, certain birthing practices, female genital mutilation, less food, education and health care for girls, dowry and bride price, widow inheritance, and female infanticide... The result for individual women and girls is mitigation of their health or their quality of life. What ail these practices have in common is that they evolve from, or are in reaction to, the preference for male children”.*

Gender inequalities, and the preference for male children, sometimes start even before birth. Diagnostic techniques, such as amniocentesis, chorionic villus sampling, and targeted ultrasound, have made it possible for parents to discover the sex of the foetus and to terminate the pregnancy if they had hoped for a child of the other sex. In a number of countries (such as China, India, and Korea), the selective abortion of female foetuses is becoming more and more common as a result of these new technologies (RCNRT, 1993).

### **The role of poverty**

The majority of the world's poor are women. Women often lack power and social status in society and, therefore, access to economic resources. (Strebel, 1994). As a result of their differential positioning in society, women are usually poorer than men, and are often economically dependent on men. (Ulin, 1992).

It would be unrealistic to talk about the feminization of poverty without mentioning the increasing number of single women with children who are heads of households. This worldwide phenomenon is a result of national and international migration of men in search for work, divorce, widowhood, wars, desertion, and the increasing number of births to unpartnered adolescent women. Female-headed households, which make up about one-quarter of households around the world (UN, 1995), are particularly disadvantaged and economically vulnerable.

Poverty has a powerful influence on health. Female poverty means that less money is available to purchase adequate and nutritious foods, which increases the risk of illness and disease. Inadequate nutrition influences disease recovery. Poverty affects a woman's available life choices. Female poverty can mean that a woman has to take whatever job she can get to support herself

and her family; this lack of choice greatly increases the probability that she will end up working in an exploitative situation with little or no occupational health and safety protection. Entering into prostitution is another strategy used by women around the world to cope with poverty.

## **Education**

In almost all developing countries, women are disadvantaged as a result of poorer educational opportunities. In India, no more than 33% of the girls receive a minimum of 5000 hours of schooling, or about six full years; whereas in China and Latin America sixty per cent of girls receive this minimal level of education (World Bank 1993). Women's rate of enrolment in secondary school lags behind men's by as much as 56% in Togo (Misch, 1992).

Reduced access to education, information and knowledge means that women are often poorly informed about health issues, about how their bodies function, and about how to protect themselves from disease, and disadvantaged in their ability to recognize and act on signs and symptoms of illness (Manderson, 1994; Vlassof 1994). Poverty of education "creates a vicious circle of myth and misinformation that perpetuates health-damaging behaviours and harmful practices" (Hammand, 1994).

The call for better education opportunities for women is often premised on the fact that educated women are better mothers, who raise fewer, better educated and healthier children (Grande, 1994). However, greater education for women not only means that their children will be healthier, it also means that women themselves will be healthier.

The link between education and improved health may be correlated to higher income levels. Better-off families can afford to send their girls to school longer and may be more inclined to consider the education of children to be an investment for the future. In poor families, however, demanding household duties often result in children getting out of school to work. Young girls, especially, drop out of school, to help their mothers. When a mother becomes seriously ill, her daughter is more likely than her son to be kept from schooling to assume increased domestic responsibilities.

## **Empowerment**

According to Tomaveski (1993), the process of empowerment for women entails breaking away from the cycle of learned and taught submission to discrimination, carried from one generation of women to the next. Increased understanding by women of their value in the family and the community and

the important contribution their labour makes to the national economy can lead to increased confidence and self-esteem, can affect women's interactions with others, and can lead to positive changes in health behaviour (Peacocke, 1995). When a woman's self-esteem improves, increasingly she feels able to make more household decisions and begin to put forward her viewpoints within the family.

## **Nutrition**

Although the nutritional status of women has received significant attention in research and interventions addressing women's health, in most cases the primary objective has been improvement of infant nutritional status. Very little attention has been paid to the problem of nutritional deficiencies among non-pregnant, non-lactating women (Paolisso and Leslie, 1995).

Women suffer disproportionately from iron-deficiency anaemia, iodine-deficiency disorders, and from stunting caused by protein-energy malnutrition. Throughout the world, 43% of women and 51 % of pregnant women suffer from iron deficiency anemia. Pregnancy puts a severe strain on women's iron status and 56 % of pregnant women in developing countries are anaemic (WHO, 1994b). Anemia is also a risk for non-pregnant women because of the iron demand of lactation and the iron losses associated with menstruation (Paolisso and Leslie, 1995).

Women's nutritional status can be significantly affected by the unequal distribution of food among family members, which is linked to women's lower social status (Breich, 1994). Discrimination can begin in early infancy with male children. In some regions of the world, men and boys routinely eat first, and women and girls "eat less food which is of inferior quality and nutritive value" (UN, 1991).

Before a woman decides to seek care, she must be able to recognize the signs and symptoms that indicate the need for care (Manderson, 1994). However, a lack of educational opportunities and poor understanding of health-related matters mean that many women are not familiar with different diseases and their presentation.

. Similarly, as a result of cultural restrictions and taboos, women may be unable to interpret signs of illness, particularly as they relate to genitals. Mannerschmidt (1994) reported that there is collective denial of women's sexual issues in Nepalese society and this has led to the absence of Nepalitans to describe aspects of the female genitals and gynaecological symptoms. Manderson (1994) described how some women, who lack knowledge about the workings of their bodies, are unable to differentiate normal menstrual

blood from other sources of blood (such as blood in the urine from schistosomiasis), especially in cases where genital mutilation has occurred. Manderson also explained that some women may not even notice the occurrence of minor bleeding (for example, if they urinate and bathe while clothed, as some cultural practices demand).

Even if a woman notices symptoms of illness, she may completely ignore these signs because of other competing demands. Women may believe that they cannot afford the “luxury” to take time out to visit a health centre or to have a period of incapacity because this would represent time and effort lost to other essential and possibly more important activities such as childcare, food production, and paid employment (Bhattacharjee and Hati, 1995). The hours when health clinics are open may not be sensitive to the gender division of labour and the timing of women’s work. As a result of the day-time responsibilities of women - such as fetching water, feeding, chicken, collecting firewood -it might be easier to visit clinics in the evening instead of during the day when modern health facilities are usually open. Other family or community members rarely assume women’s essential tasks when they are ill. Women therefore continue to perform necessary activities that are difficult to defer (Watts et al. 1989). Because women do not take off enough time to care for their health, it usually takes them longer to fully recover from illness or disease. The amount of time that a woman stays in hospital (if she has to go) can be significantly shorter than the amount of time taken by a man, and a woman invariably returns to her work, both inside and outside the home, before she is fully recovered.

Women in developing countries tend to place the health and wellbeing of their families, especially children, as a priority over their own health and, consequently, do not seek medical care for themselves. Women “give everything to their children” because “the children always come first” and “the only thing (they) have in life is (their) children” (Bonino, 1994). Women will ignore their own symptoms of disease and illness, but always go “to the pregnancy check-ups as a duty, because ... it is a duty to do it for the welfare of the child. (Bonino, 1994). Furthermore, male children tend to be given superior access to care compared to female children. The general low status of women, and their internalization of this status, results in marginalization of women’s physical, psychological and emotional needs (Manderson, 1994; Bhattacharjee and Hati, 1995). Women are less likely than men to consult modern health services, and they wait longer than men to seek treatment when ill, are reluctant to spend limited resources on their own needs, and often cope with illness by self-treatment, by consulting traditional healers, or by simply living with the condition (Osero, 1991).

Social support from others, such as relatives, friends, and neighbours can play an important role in fostering the physical and psychological health of women (Bonino, 1994), and can greatly influence the health-seeking behaviour of women. Women, particularly poor women, and those solely responsible for the care of their households, “lack the support of the family, someone to tell her to go to the doctor, to take care of herself, no one worries about her” (Bonino, 1994). Less importance may be placed on the health of female members of the household, compared with male members, and, consequently, a woman’s illness may receive little attention from others (Bhattacharjee & Hati, 1995). While men are strongly pressured by other family members, particularly mothers and wives to seek treatment, women are unlikely to receive such encouragement (Niraula, 1994) - “a woman’s role is to nurse, not to be nursed”.

A study conducted in an Egyptian hamlet found that a sick person’s access to care was determined by the person’s status within the family. Young women considered to be of low status, were likely to be treated by home remedies or traditional healers. “The women seemed to need to convince the men that they (were) dangerously ill before they (were) taken to the doctor?” (Lane and Meleis, 1991). However, individuals with higher status, such as men of all ages and adult mothers of sons, were likely to be taken directly to a private medical practitioner.

The true extent of some women’s health problems may be completely underestimated by society. Because some very serious illnesses and conditions may not be properly acknowledged by society (e.g. Cancer, AIDS, physical disabilities, chronic fatigue and depression), women with such problems may not be assigned “legitimate sick status”. If a woman’s illness is not identified as being authentic, it is doubtful that she will receive support from family members and the wider community to seek care.

Shame and embarrassment can lead to reluctance on the part of women to share disease conditions with family members and health providers, and this may prevent them from reporting to health services for diagnosis and treatment of illnesses. A reluctance to tell others is particularly acute in case of illnesses with genital urinary involvement (Manderson, 1994). There is considerable stigma associated with STDs because these diseases are associated with sexual deviance. It is not surprising that women are very concerned about the consequences of detection and the possibility of being ostracised by their family and community.



## Conclusion

Women's multiple roles and responsibilities expose them to myriad health risks that are poorly understood. There is, therefore, an urgent need to understand patterns of health and disease of women throughout life. We must address the invisibility of women, especially beyond their reproductive health, and encourage the development of policies that will lead to a comprehensive approach to the world's most pressing health problems and needs. As economic and environmental issues are linked, so safe and healthy women contribute to economic growth and environmental protection; only with appropriate attention to the health of women can they participate in National Development to their fullest potential.

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## **L'impact socio-culturel des comportements démographiques sur la formulation et l'exécution des politiques et programmes de population**

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### **Introduction**

Des changements démographiques, économiques et sociaux ont lieu en ce moment au sein de la société camerounaise qui régorge de plusieurs sous-cultures. La question pressante est celle de savoir à quel rythme et à quels niveaux ces différentes sous-cultures s'adaptent au changement? Quels sont les conflits ou les oppositions qui ont lieu entre la théorie et la pratique au niveau des comportements démographiques des membres de la société? Tels sont les défis du control social et les chances du changement social. La question qui nous concerne est de savoir quelles sont les implications en ce qui concerne les comportements démographiques, la formulation et l'exécution des politiques et programmes de population.

Cette étude vise: à identifier les sous-cultures les plus importantes delà société camerounaise, et les facteurs socio-culturels qui expliquent les diverses formes de comportements dermographiques: à identifier les processus de changement et agents de changement; à assurer le feedback des résultats de la recherche au niveau des politiques et des programmes de population. L'un des principaux points réside dans la nécessité de compléter les données quantitatives, sur lesquelles sont basées la plupart des activités de population, par des données qualitatives qui peuvent apporter beaucoup plus de réponses aux questions relatives à la compréhension des comportements démographiques (fertilité, santé reproductive, mortalité, relations de genre, migration et urbanisation...), et qui expliqueraient les différences entre ce que les populations affirment ressentir ou faire et, ce qu'elles font effectivement d'une part, et pourquoi il y a un écart entre les deux attitudes.

Le cadre théorique de notre analyse s'inspire de la critique de l'approche structuro-fonctionnaliste par Lookwood (1995). Ainsi l'approche structuro-fonctionnaliste n'explique pas pourquoi les populations agissent telle qu'elles le font, pourquoi parfois, elles suivent les normes généralement acceptées et, d'autre part, pourquoi on observe des comportements déviants vis-à-vis de ces

normes. Lookwood, tout en rappelant que des populations différentes perçoivent d'une manière différente le même message, ce qui est important pour les IEC, milite en faveur des microlevel fieldwork, impliquant l'analyse des études de cas et la distinction entre les actions et les normes non exprimées comme données, afin d'élucider l'écart entre les normes et les comportements.

Le thème principal des hypothèses testées au cours des opérations de recherche stipule que, certaines couches de la population à cause des différences ethniques, socio-économiques, et de l'environnement culturel dans lequel elles vivent, ne sont pas particulièrement affectées par les messages généraux adressés à l'endroit de la population globale, que l'on utilise dans plusieurs programmes d'IEC et politiques de population. Ainsi, les préoccupations et les problèmes des populations camerounaises ne sont pas toujours ceux perçus par les réalisateurs des politiques et des programmes de population. Les programmes d'IEC, pour être plus efficaces doivent rechercher une plus grande spécificité dans la sélection de l'audience, la compréhension des sous-cultures existantes des populations cibles.

Les analyses de cette étude sont basées sur la revue de la littérature, l'observation directe, les discussions de groupe et, les entretiens individuels approfondis auprès des hommes, des femmes, des jeunes, et des couples, en tenant compte du genre, des différences ethniques et régionales. Les données ont été collectées auprès des infrastructures sanitaires, des unités de planning familial et, des autres services sociaux.

Quatre sites ont été retenus dans le cadre de cette étude, représentant quatre régions culturelles et écologiques: Douala (région côtière), Yaoundé (région centrale de forêt pluvieuse), Bamenda (région des grassfields). Tous ces sites représentent également les principaux groupes culturels ou ethniques du Cameroun: les pygmées (forêt pluvieuse); les bantous (région côtière et forêt pluvieuse centrale); semi-bantou (hauts plateaux de l'ouest); Soudanais et fulbé (région soudano-sahélienne). En tout 57 sous-cultures ou groupes ethniques ont été impliquées dans cette étude dont: 15 sous-groupes bantou, 10 semi-bantou, 11 Soudanais et 3 foubés.

Le champ de discussion et d'analyse recouvre les aspects de la santé reproductive en rapport avec les problèmes sociaux et culturels qui affectent les populations des sites retenus. L'analyse des données fait ressortir les motivations et attitudes à l'égard de la fertilité ou de la sexualité, le planning familial, le mariage, les normes et tabous, le statut de la femme, et les autres facteurs et circonstances influençant les comportements démographiques (mortalité, migration, urbanisation....). Ainsi, notre réflexion s'articule autour de trois thèmes principaux à savoir: l'analyse des facteurs socio-culturels;

l'importance de la dimension socio-culturelle dans les services et l'information et; l'implication des résultats au niveau des politiques et des programmes de population.

## **Fécondité**

### **Fertilité et structure sociale**

La fertilité ici est entendue comme la capacité potentielle de concevoir un enfant à partir d'une relation sexuelle normale. Elle s'oppose ainsi à la stérilité qui est considérée comme l'incapacité d'une femme sexuellement active et qui ne pratique pas la contraception d'avoir une naissance viable.

L'une des raisons qui justifient le maintien de la croissance élevée de la population camerounaise, que nous considérons comme un facteur, un déterminant de la fécondité, est la structure sociale des divers groupes de populations. L'enquête nationale de fécondité (ENF) de 1978 révèle un indice synthétique de fécondité de 6,4 contre 5,8 en 1991 et 5,2 en 1998, respectivement, selon les EDS réalisées au cours des deux années indiquées. Au Cameroun, selon l'EDS 1998, seulement 5,5% de femmes actuellement en union et âgées de 35-49 ans (âges auxquels l'arrivée d'un premier enfant est peu probable) n'ont jamais eu d'enfants et peuvent être considérées comme étant stériles. Une descendance nombreuse permet à l'individu, de s'assurer, un soutien dans la vieillesse et une postérité, de transmettre son patronyme et de s'affirmer socialement. A l'occasion du deuil d'un homme, on ne parle jamais des biens matériels laissés, mais des richesses humaines comptabilisées en termes d'enfants et de petits fils. Une femme stérile est méprisée: elle n'a pas de valeur au sein de sa société.

### **Stérilité**

La perception de la fertilité et de la stérilité dépend de la place que les diverses populations accordent à l'enfant, de la valeur de l'enfant au sein de la société. La stérilité est perçue comme la plus grande malédiction dont peuvent être victimes, une femme, un homme, ou un couple. Une femme stérile est méprisée: elle n'a pas de valeur au sein de sa société. Les responsabilités en ce qui concerne l'incapacité d'un couple à concevoir un enfant ou à procréer ne sont pas toujours établies dans les diverses cultures. Toutefois, la potentialité des hommes est considérée comme étant acquise dans tous les groupes ethniques et, c'est aux femmes que reviennent les accusations et les blâmes lorsqu'un couple ne parvient pas à avoir d'enfants.

Les causes de la stérilité quant à elles varient d'un groupe à l'autre. Chez les Meta et les Nso des régions du Nord-Ouest, elles sont purement liées à des

pratiques de sorcellerie (pour cause de jalousie ou de haine), ou à un héritage familial, tandis que chez les foubé du Nord, il s'agit simplement de la volonté de Dieu, (qui donne des enfants à qui il veut). Chez les Béti, la stérilité d'une femme peut être due à la non observation ou au viol d'une consigne lors de la cérémonie traditionnelle et rituelle de mariage.

Plusieurs solutions existent au sein des divers groupes pour remédier à la situation. Dans les régions du Nord-ouest, une danse rituelle a toujours lieu à l'occasion d'un accouchement pour éloigner ou préserver la femme d'une éventuelle stérilité. Cérémonie au cours laquelle des chansons de fertilité sont exécutées autour de la femme dont le corps a été au préalable recouverte d'huile de palme. Par ailleurs, des investigations ont parfois lieu avant le mariage au niveau des familles concernées (liées à la réputation de la famille), pour dépister des éventuels cas de stérilité, de maladies chroniques (l'épilepsie a été particulièrement citée) ou mentales, que l'on pourrait hériter et, introduire dans sa lignée, en contractant le mariage.

### **Mariage**

Concernant le mariage, tous les groupes ethniques et toutes les régions révèrent l'existence de trois niveaux d'union: traditionnel ou coutumier, officiel (au niveau de la mairie) et, religieux. Le mariage traditionnel est virtuellement la forme la plus valable aux yeux des populations à contracter, à travers l'échange des dons et le paiement de la dot qui octroie chez les Béti le droit de paternité à l'époux sur les enfants qui naîtront dans son foyer. Les raisons qui justifient le mariage sont diverses et varient selon les groupes. Dans l'ensemble, il apparaît comme le cadre le plus propice à la procréation et à l'éducation des enfants, il est également un signe de maturité et de responsabilité.

Les pratiques liées à la dot sont diverses et varient d'un groupe ethnique à l'autre. D'une manière générale, la dot est constituée des dons qui ont un caractère symbolique, et d'une certaine somme d'argent. Les sommes varient entre 50 et plus d'un million de francs dans les régions du Centre, Sud et Littoral. Les populations sont en générale favorables au paiement de la dot. Tous, cependant, déplorent les abus qui ont souvent lieu, et l'allure commerciale que prend le phénomène. Le mariage à l'état civil est perçu comme conférant des droits civils, mais il reste invalide au sein de tous les groupes ethniques. La majorité des femmes foubé interrogées dans les régions du Nord n'étaient pas mariées à l'état civil.

On note par ailleurs un recul considérable au niveau de l'entrée en première union, qui varie d'une région à l'autre, et d'un groupe ethnique à l'autre. Selon l'enquête démographique de santé du Cameroun 1998, l'Age

médian (en années) à la première union des femmes de 25-49 ans est de 17,4, contre 16,5 en 1991. Ainsi, les mariages sont de plus en plus tardivement contractés (au-delà de 20-24 ans) surtout dans les régions du Centre, littoral et Sud, tandis que la précocité reste notoire dans les régions du Nord (dès l'âge de douze ans) où, la tradition destine la jeune fille uniquement à une vie de mariage et de mère. Les raisons qui justifient le retard de l'âge au premier mariage selon les réponses recueillies au cours des discussions de groupe sont focalisées autour des effets de la crise économique avec le manque d'emplois, le désir très poussé des jeunes de continuer les études.

### **Statut Matrimonial**

Trois types d'union existent et sont pratiqués dans l'ensemble du pays avec quelques différences ethniques et régionales: la monogamie, la polygamie et, l'union libre.

La polygamie encore pratiquée dans les régions du Grand Nord et de l'Ouest du pays, connaît un sérieux déclin. Au niveau régional, elle concerne environ 1/3, (33,9%) des hommes mariés de l'Adamaoua/Nord/Extrême-Nord, et est justifiée par la religion musulmane qui l'autorise mais limite le nombre d'épouses légitimes à quatre. A l'Ouest et dans le Littoral on a 31,3%, tandis qu'elle touche moins de 10% des hommes mariés du Centre et du Sud et 9,8% de l'Est. Selon Latour, parlant des Bamiléké, "la polygamie a été largement pratiquée chez les Bamiléké parce qu'elle repose, d'une part, sur un différentiel de nuptialité qui veut que les filles se marient jeunes et les garçons âgés et, d'autre part, sur redistribution des veuves aux frères et au successeur du défunt, Le degré de polygamie y est aussi fonction du rang social dans la mesure où les notables et les fils du chef ont en moyenne deux fois plus de femmes que les serviteurs et les autres membres du village" (1991). La baisse observée au niveau de la prévalence de ce phénomène dans l'ensemble du pays peut être expliquée par la baisse du taux de mortalité liée aux soins médicaux qui augmente les chances de survie des enfants. Elle est également en rapport avec l'augmentation du niveau d'instruction et le statut social des femmes et des hommes même au sein des groupes foubé du Nord. La crise économique avec l'incapacité des hommes à subvenir aux besoins des épouses nombreuses a une part non négligeable.

Cela bouleverse les perceptions de la virginité, car dans la plupart des sociétés et des groupes étudiés, la virginité est considérée comme une bonne chose, elle est une valeur sociale parce qu'elle confère à la jeune fille qui arrive en mariage dans cet état une certaine importance (les exigences en matière de dot sont plus rigoureuses), et fait la fierté et l'honneur des parents qui ont su élever et éduquer leur progéniture, comme c'est le cas chez les Noni ou les Bali



des régions du Nord-Ouest. Au sein de la culture Bandjoun, la virginité est souhaitée, mais au cas où elle ne l'est plus, la jeune fille est tout de même acceptée et, "on attend les résultats", c'est-à-dire, la grossesse.

Mais de plus en plus, la virginité apparaît comme "une chose du passé", elle a perdu toute sa valeur et son importance. En milieu urbain, il ressort que lorsqu'une fille demeure vierge au-delà d'un certain âge (20 ans et parfois 16), elle est marginalisée, stigmatisée et, est l'objet de raillerie de la part de ses camarades. Selon les réponses des femmes et des jeunes filles, elles ne peuvent pas se permettre d'arriver le jour de la nuit des noces "toutes bêtes, ne sachant rien". Les hommes et les femmes considèrent l'expérience sexuelle, comme un facteur de stabilité du futur mariage.

D'une manière générale la sexualité des adolescents et des femmes, est une sexualité contrôlée, embrigadée par la communauté dont ils sont membres, il s'agit d'une sexualité orientée vers le mariage et la pérennité du lignage. Les canaux les plus utilisés sont l'école, les médias et plus particulièrement la télévision très désapprouvée par les parents. Ainsi la sexualité est étroitement liée à l'évolution de la société globale, au contexte des changements dus à l'introduction des valeurs et des modèles étrangers (mariage comme étant un contrat, rôle de la cellule familiale, modalité du rapport sexuel).

### **Divorce**

En ce qui concerne le divorce, les diverses traditions répertoriées ne l'autorisent pas et, tout est mis en œuvre, surtout en milieu rural, pour le combattre. Toutefois des cas sont observés qui sont liés à la stérilité de la femme dans son ménage. La majorité des femmes interrogées préfèrent rester en mariage, (celles qui sont stériles proposent à leur mari de prendre une seconde épouse qui lui permettra d'avoir des enfants), parce que les femmes mariées ont beaucoup plus de valeur aux yeux de la société et, de considération. Mais de plus en plus en milieu urbain, des cas de divorce se multiplient, dont les causes restent encore difficiles à déterminer, si l'on ne tient pas compte du niveau d'instruction de plus en plus élevé des partenaires, de l'indépendance ou de l'autonomie de la femme et, de l'influence de la perception occidentale du mariage comme étant un contrat.

## **Santé Reproductive**

### **Circoncision et Excision**

La pratique de la circoncision est présente dans tous les sites et groupes ethniques étudiés, à l'exception des Toupouri des régions de l'Extrême-Nord, qui justifient cela par le fait qu'ils estiment qu'elle est liée à l'islam, et il s'agit

pour eux de refuser la pénétration ou la domination des musulmans au sein de leur groupe. Cependant, elle est de plus en plus pratiquée à cause de l'impact de la migration et de l'urbanisation. L'Age auquel cette pratique survient selon les cultures tourment autour des motifs. Seuls les prestataires de service au sein des formations sanitaires ont une connaissance plus approfondie. Cette connaissance des maladies sexuellement transmissibles affectent particulièrement les comportements sexuels des divers groupes de population. Des mesures préventives sont adoptées, parmi lesquelles l'utilisation des préservatifs (plus précisément le condom), et la fidélité à un seul partenaire. En milieu urbain généralement, les populations se soignent au sein des hôpitaux, même si certains, hommes comme femmes estiment qu'il s'agit des maladies honteuses, ce qui les pousse à se soigner dans la rue, Les investigations en milieu rural ont révéls l'existence des guérisseurs traditionnels, qui traitent efficacement les MST, plus particulièrement chez les Mankon.

L'infidélité au partenaire varie selon les régions, c'est ainsi que lors des discussions avec les femmes des régions du Centre et du Sud, (en majorité des Bédi), toutes, à l'exception d'une (probablement à cause de son âge avance), ont affirmé qu'elles entretenaient des relations sexuelles extraconjugales, donc qu'elles étaient infidèles à leurs époux, Celle tendance est également relevée par l'EDSC 1998 dans la mesure où, 10% de femmes des régions du Centre, Sud et Est sont infidèles à leurs époux, contre 3% dans les régions du Nord du pays. Ainsi, le pouvoir abortif des relations sexuelles extra maritales traditionnellement invoque dans certains groupes et qui maintenait les femmes fidèles, semble avoir perdu de son emprise surtout en milieu urbain. Cette situation est beaucoup plus poussée chez les hommes tant en milieu urbain qu'en milieu rural, avec le phénomène de "deuxième bureau".

### **Les relations sexuelles postpartum, intervalle Intergenesique et tabous**

Les comportements liés aux relations sexuelles après l'accouchement diffèrent d'un groupe ethnique à l'autre et peuvent être situés entre trois mois et deux ans. La période d'abstinence traditionnellement observés au sein de la majorité des groupes ethniques est de deux ans (Bédi des régions du Centre, Sud et, la plupart de groupes du Grand Nord). La mesure la plus répandue visant à sécuriser l'enfant consiste à envoyer la femme " au village" pendant cette période, ou jusqu'au moment du sevrage. Mais l'analyse des réponses des populations laisse entrevoir un recul considérable dans toutes les régions (sauf dans certains milieux ruraux), de la durée d'abstinence. Plusieurs femmes, hommes et couples, ont affirmé reprendre les relations sexuelles trois mois après l'accouchement.

L'Age à la première naissance des femmes connaît également des bouleversements au sein des populations et ceci en fonction des régions. Dans les régions du Nord la précocité du mariage est à l'origine de l'âge précoce à la première naissance qui oscille entre 13 et 16 ans.

L'impact socio-culturel des comportements démographiques sur la formulation et l'exécution des politiques et programmes de population (Aoudou Charles)

### **Soins maternels après accouchement et avortement**

Une pratique que nous avons relevé et qui a retenu notre attention dans tous les sites et au sein des divers groupes de population est le massage à l'eau chaude qui est administré à la femme après l'accouchement. Cette pratique persiste, malgré ses effets négatifs, pourtant très connus des divers groupes de tous les sites étudiés, tant en milieu rural qu'en milieu urbain. Ce comportement peut être lié aux causes évoquées plus haut, relatives au bouleversement de la perception de la sexualité, et surtout à la corrélation qui est établie entre conception d'une grossesse et interruption des études par plusieurs enfants et parents.

Le pouvoir de décision en ce qui concerne la famille, est surtout le fait de l'homme, du mari et, quelques fois des autres membres de la famille. La demande en enfants des femmes camerounaises est surtout conditionnée par leur mari, ils sont les garants de la tradition et c'est leurs opinions qui déterminant la fécondité et par conséquent la pratique de la contraception.

D'autre part, certaines rumeurs entretenues autour de la contraception affectent considérablement la pratique contraceptive au milieu des femmes. Chez les jeunes filles, la crainte que le condom demeure dans le vagin persiste, certaines femmes affirment et croient fermement que les pilules font grossir, et rendent parfois stériles. Les lieux d'approvisionnement en matière de contraceptifs restent par ordre de préférence, les pharmacies, la rue et, les hôpitaux. La rue est le lieu le plus discret et le plus propice à l'achat des condoms, selon les hommes. Chez les femmes par contre, les unités de planning familial sont les lieux d'approvisionnement, elles sont associées aux centres de protection maternelle et infantile.

Au-delà des chiffres avancés par les populations au cours de l'enquête, l'idée selon laquelle l'enfant est un don de Dieu a été mise en exergue par les adultes et les habitants des milieux ruraux qui désiraient entre 6 et 15 enfants.

En milieu urbain, et beaucoup plus parmi les jeunes et adolescents, la tendance devient de plus en plus réfléchie, la moyenne des chiffres évoqués peut être réduite à 4 enfants au maximum. Le nombre d'enfants désirés ici, est proportionnel aux moyens disponibles, car il faut pouvoir subvenir aux

multiples besoins des enfants, éducation, santé ... cet écart entre les jeunes et les adultes se perçoit également au niveau de l'EDSC 1998, où la taille de la famille augmente en fonction de l'âge, elle passe de 5,3 enfants chez les 15 à 20 ans à 7,9 enfants chez les 45 à 49 ans.

## **Mortalité maternelle et infantile**

Plusieurs rites qui varient selon les groupes ethniques, ont lieu après le décès d'une mère. Le bébé orphelin sera désormais couché aux côtés d'un tronc de bananier qui fera office de mère et, sera nourri par l'une des tantes qui assurera l'allaitement de ses propres seins. Dans les régions du haut plateau, l'enterrement d'une femme ayant donné naissance à des jumeaux exige que l'on place à côté du corps deux doigts de plantain ou des fleurs de bananiers qui symbolisent les deux enfants laissés. La mortalité infantile au sein de tous les groupes étudiés n'est pas une tragédie en soi (particulièrement les bébés). Des invocations ont lieu, au cours desquelles, la mère confirme son affection à l'enfant décédé et lui demande de revenir dans son sein. Ces croyances relatives au retour de l'enfant dans le sein de sa mère sont identiques dans les régions du Centre, Littoral, et Nord-Ouest. Tout cela voile la pensée des populations sur les causes des décès des enfants, qui sont souvent très vite liées à des pratiques de sorcellerie ou au fatalisme.

## **Migration et urbanisation**

### **Migration**

Les migrations internes sont très intenses au Cameroun, c'est d'elles que dépend le nombre d'habitants que l'on trouve dans le pays. Les données collectées durant la recherche, montrent qu'il existe un exode rural massif vers les villes. Les mouvements partant des hauts plateaux de l'Ouest sont les plus importants, en raison des migrations internes des paysans Bamiléké qui quittent une région fortement peuplée et dont les terres sont intensément cultivées. Ils partent en général de la province de l'Ouest vers le Littoral, le Centre et le Sud-Ouest. Ceux qui sont à la recherche des postes d'ouvriers se dirigent vers les villes de Douala, Tiko, Kumba. Il faudrait tenir compte à ce niveau, de l'organisation sociale des Bamiléké qui est beaucoup plus faite des exclus, liés aux systèmes d'héritage au sein des familles.

Les déplacements Nord-Sud, représentent plusieurs aspects, avec l'exode rural vers les grandes villes du Sud, le déplacement des familles entières de l'Extrême-Nord vers le Sud, les transhumances des bergers de l'Adamaoua et de leurs troupeaux vers les régions du Centre et de l'Est. Il convient de

souligner que les mouvements inverses (Sud-Nord), sont très réduits surement à cause du fait que, le Nord est économiquement moins avancé que le Sud du pays. Les femmes sont de plus en plus nombreuses parmi les migrants à cause de leur intégration progressive dans les secteurs économiques du pays.

Concernant les migrations externes, il est important de relever que selon la carte ethnique du pays, plusieurs ethnies se trouvent à cheval sur les frontières nationales, ce qui signifie que les déplacements d'un pays à l'autre ne peuvent pas être enregistrés avec exactitude. Les réponses des populations au cours de l'étude, révèle l'existence d'un taux élevé des ressortissants du Tchad dans les régions du Nord et, des Nigériens, qui se retrouvent également en nombre considérable dans les zones anglophones, et dans les deux grandes métropoles du pays (Yaoundé et Douala).

Les causes de la migration sont en générale liées aux maladies qui exigent l'excommunication ou l'isolement du malade hors du village, la sorcellerie qui pousse les populations à fuir leur village, le manque de terres (caractère sacré de la terre, systèmes d'héritage basé sur l'exclusion chez les bamiléke en général), et les conflits ethniques.

### **Urbanisation**

La physionomie actuelle des villes camerounaises est directement issue des villes coloniales. Depuis lors, des faits socio-politiques nouveaux ont donné un essor sans précédent à l'urbanisation qui a engendré gigantisme et le désordre marqué par une croissance incontrôlable et peu planifiée. Le phénomène d'urbanisation se caractérise par une croissance rapide de la population urbaine. Les grandes villes sont encerclées par des banlieues sous-intégrées (quartiers spontanés, constructions en général dans l'anarchie et l'irrespect des règles élémentaires d'urbanisme), faites de lotissements arbitraires où s'entassent des populations démunies.

Il convient de noter que l'armature urbaine camerounaise se caractérise par deux éléments fondamentalement remarquables: d'une part, la répartition des fonctions capitales politiques et économiques entre deux villes: Yaoundé et Douala; d'autre part, le dynamisme des villes moyennes. La forte urbanisation est surtout liée au solde migratoire (fruit de l'exode rural) et dans une certaine mesure au reclassement de certaines zones rurales comme zones urbaines. Elle est surtout le fait des provinces suivantes: Centre, Littoral, Sud-Ouest. Pour de multiples raisons, certaines régions deux éléments fondamentalement remarquables: d'une part la répartition des fonctions capitales politiques et économiques entre deux villes: Yaoundé et Douala ; d'autre part le dynamisme des villes moyennes. La forte urbanisation est surtout liée au solde migratoire (fruit de l'exode: Centre, Littoral, Sud-ouest. Pour de multiples raisons,

certaines régions: Centre, Littoral, Sud-Ouest. Pour de multiples raisons, certaines régions deux éléments fondamentalement remarquables: d'une part, la répartition des fonctions capitales politiques et économiques entre deux villes: Yaoundé et Douala; d'autre part le dynamisme des villes moyennes. La forte urbanisation est surtout liée au solde migratoire (fruit de l'exode rurale) et dans une certaine mesure au reclassement de certaines zones rurales comme zones urbaines. Elle est surtout le fait des provinces suivantes de pouvoir centralisée chez les bété avec agents de changement autorisés, Structure politique segmentée et diffuse des groupes bantou du forêt, Structure hiérarchisée dans la partie nord du pays.

Sur le plan de la distribution spatiale des formations sanitaires, les diverses régions sont inégalement couvertes. Ainsi, la province du Centre, dont le chef-lieu est la ville de Yaoundé, est la région la plus fournie en matière d'infrastructures sanitaires. En ce qui concerne les infrastructures de Santé Maternelle et Infantile, et de Planning Familial, les quatre villes où l'étude a été menée sont assez bien fournies. L'accessibilité des services de Planning Familial et des formations sanitaires dans les chefs-lieux de provinces est relativement facile. La situation reste médiocre dans les zones rurales ou dans la province du Centre, par exemple, 38% des villages sont dans l'ensemble distants de 5 km au moins de la formation sanitaire qui les dessert.

Les répondants interrogés en ce qui concerne la scolarisation ont révélés dans l'ensemble un manque cruel d'enseignants à l'exception des provinces du Centre et du Littoral. En effet, certaines provinces telles que l'Extrême-Nord, et les zones rurales sont redoutées par la majorité des enseignants qui y sont affectés après leur formation. Ce qui crée un sureffectif au niveau des deux provinces que sont le Centre et le Littoral.

Les facteurs socio-culturels ont une influence certaine en ce qui concerne l'écart entre la disponibilité des services sociaux, leur utilisation, et les satisfactions qui peuvent en découler. L'analyse des propos des personnes interrogées a permis de comprendre qu'il existe différentes options qui s'offrent aux populations lorsqu'ils ont de problèmes de santé. Ainsi, les populations utilisent d'une manière alternative et parfois successivement ces services. Ceci est dû aux représentations qu'ils se font des diverses maladies et moyens thérapeutiques traditionnels d'une part, et aux représentations qu'ils se font des hôpitaux modernes, d'autre part.

Les résultats principaux peuvent être résumés et mis en exergue pour voir comment ils peuvent aider dans la formulation et l'exécution des politiques et programmes de population.

## **Implication des résultats: Politiques et Programmes**

### **1. Les groupes de population**

Les entretiens et discussion de groupes entrepris dans les principaux sites d'étude ont conduit à la conclusion selon laquelle la perception des issues et des problèmes de population est fonction du groupe d'âge et des cultures. Les idées et les croyances que les populations ont en tant que facteurs socio-culturels affectent les comportements démographiques des différents groupes ethniques et des cultures. (Les perceptions et les traitements des issues telles que: fertilité, mariage, fécondité, dot, virginité, planning familial, varient considérablement.). Les populations qui migrent vers les villes tendent à ignorer des normes et pratiques culturelles encore en vigueur dans leurs villages. La virginité et autres pratiques qui ôtent le droit à la femme ne sont pas répandues. La précocité du mariage est répandue parmi les groupes soudanais des régions du nord où les filles se marient dès l'âge de douze ans. Certains sous-groupes (banyangui) pratiquent la mutilation génitale, et un sous-groupe (arabe-choas) au sein des fulbés pratiquent non seulement la mutilation génitale mais également l'infibulation. Toutes ces variations de comportement démographiques des populations camerounaises amènent à suggérer que la mise sur pied d'une politique et d'un programme de population doit prendre en compte les coutumes, les croyances et pratiques des différentes cultures et sous-cultures des populations du Cameroun.

(Variations culturelles dans les comportements démographiques et besoin d'adaptation aux croyances et perceptions des populations; les jeunes sont plus ouverts au changement et constituent un cadre d'intervention appropriés: besoin d'écoute de la voix du peuple 'démocratisation' dans les questions de population 'participation').

### **2. Les directeurs de programmes**

Au niveau des prestataires de services, l'étude a révélé certaines inadéquations: pauvre conception de l'enregistrement des informations et mauvaise conservation des données; conviction religieuse comme contrainte au planning familial; la maîtrise de la langue locale et des cultures au sein des services de santé et ; le besoin de formation.

L'analyse des données a montré que l'approche personnaliste du savoir dans la plus part des cultures du pays ne stimule pas le partage de la connaissance, le savoir est le pouvoir, et celui qui le possède l'utilise pour son prestige et sa grandeur. Le savoir, l'autorité, et le pouvoir sont des concepts critiques qu'il convient de ne pas ignorer au sein des services en ce qui concerne les prestataires de services.



L'enregistrement de l'information dans les formulaires n'est pas systématique dans l'ensemble des formations sanitaires du pays. L'enseignement des cours de base sur la culture dans les formations sanitaires et scolaires apparaît comme une nécessité. Cela cadrera bien avec la politique d'intégration nationale qui vise l'amélioration d'un sentiment d'unité nationale au sein des populations ethniquement diverses.

Les concepteurs de politiques doivent être conscients de l'existence d'une multitude de camerounais qui s'opposent au planning familial moderne à cause des convictions religieuses ou personnelles. Les données recueillies auprès des prestataires de services montrent que certains prescrivent des méthodes qui ne posent pas de problème de conscience à leur niveau et au niveau des clients.

### **Les Concepteurs, Responsables De Politiques Et Programmes (Conscientisation de tous les facteurs évoqués)**

#### **Collecte des données, compilation et analyse pour l'amélioration d'une connaissance de base des populations locales**

La collecte des données ethnographiques implique le travail avec les gens, pendant un long période, Gagner leur confiance améliore la qualité, et le volume des données. Les méthodes qualitatives qui partent de l'observation participante a une prise de notes extensive et au choix des informateurs sont des aspects critiques de la collecte de données. Dans cette étude, la méthode RAP (Rapid Assessment Procedures) qui permet aux chercheurs de collecter des informations importantes ou des données dans une période relativement courte, au lieu d'un temps prolongé sur le terrain, a été utilisée. Armes d'un emploi du temps et d'un guide d'entretien, le chercheur est capable en cinq semaines de visiter huit unités de PF dans quatre provinces, de conduire seize discussions de groupe et d'interviewer 150 informateurs de 57 groupes ethniques représentant à la fois le milieu urbain et le milieu rural. Cela permet au chercheur de choisir d'une manière stratégique les informateurs en considérant la structure des unités visitées et le contenu des informations.

L'approche de collecte des données ci-dessus évoquée, a été également utilisée pour obtenir les informations auprès des prestataires de service. (La maîtrise et le contrôle des langues locales fortifient et améliorent les rapports entre le chercheur et les informateurs.)

Dans l'analyse des données qualitatives, le chercheur recherche les modes dans les données et les idées qui permettent d'expliquer les comportements existant: cette recherche de modèles commence souvent avec le travail de terrain et continue tout au long de l'étude. Au courant de cette étude, nous sommes partis de la prémisse selon lequel, dans plusieurs activités de

population, les sous-cultures ne sont pas souvent prises en compte au niveau de la formulation des politiques, la planification et l'exécution. La recherche des cohérences et des incohérences parmi les informateurs clés, et l'exposition des raisons pour lesquelles ils désapprouvent l'analyse de certaines données a motivé le désir d'une validation constante des informations recueillies.

Dans la présentation des données, nous avons essayé de rendre le texte plus vivant, en utilisant des citations directes des informateurs. Telle anecdote ou tel commentaire d'un informateur peut être révélateur d'une logique sociale, et contribue à éviter au chercheur une analyse excessive. Pour eux, il serait bénéfique d'organiser des séminaires afin de divulguer et de valider les résultats de l'étude.

La recherche participative implique deux catégories d'acteurs: les chercheurs et les répondants (populations). Lorsque des populations ont participé à une Recherche-Action ou à une recherche entreprise pour apporter une solution à un problème, leur participation doit être effective avec un partage significatif des résultats. Une des méthodes importantes consiste à organiser des séminaires locaux ou dans des villages et sites d'étude. Ce processus permet au chercheur de valider les résultats ou de collecter des informations additionnelles.

(Observation des participants locaux des sites, telle qu'ils se voient, ou aimeraient être conçus dans les statistiques, en d'autres termes comment la recherche participative implique les populations locales)

Les perceptions et les projections que les informateurs ont d'eux-mêmes au niveau des statistiques sont composées et chargées de plusieurs réactions. Nous avons remarqué que la participation des populations était synonyme d'une contribution individuelle, directe à la politique et à la prise de décisions. La collecte des données par groupe ethnique a été perçue comme une représentation des populations au-delà des simples références statistiques pour inclure le signe représentant d'une culture ou d'une sous-culture. Cela nous a permis d'établir des identités en ligne avec les objectifs de l'étude entre les individus d'un même groupe ethnique qui résident dans des sites distincts, et les influences des cultures croisées. D'autre part l'équipe de recherche elle-même constitue une ressource, dans la mesure où l'information provenant des chercheurs peut modifier le système d'alliance des membres respectifs des groupes de discussion ou des informateurs.

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## **The Anthropology of Violence against the Girl Child in Abakaliki, Nigeria**

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### **Introduction and Statement of Problem**

The position of the girl-child has become an emerging focus of reproductive health research. World-wide, the concern is being expressed of the wretched state of the girl-child, apparently, as a result of the fact that matters associated with their welfare and survival has been consciously or otherwise relegated to the background (FOS, 1995).

Global concern on the plight of the girl-child is a recent development (ICRW, 1995). Carreon (1996) noted that the girl child's situation never caught the attention of the first three conferences on Women which took place in Mexico City in 1975; Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985). In 1989, the UN adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Consequently, the following conferences: the 1990 New York World Children Summit; the 1993 Vienna Conference on Human Rights; the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, Egypt; the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women, brought the plight of the girl-child into the limelight. A section of their resolutions was devoted to the critical condition of the girl-child (Cabrera-Balleza, 1996; Ogidi, 1997). Nigeria participated in all these conferences. Hence, the country is one of those ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the OAU Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Abati, 1995) and a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of Discriminatory Practices Against Women (CEDAW).

Despite ratification of these conventions, deep-rooted socio-cultural practices have ensured the persistence of discrimination of all kinds against the girl-child. In many societies, the girl-child is the one' that is. A number of discriminatory and obnoxious, violent practices have been institutionalised in cultural traditions which have been translated and legitimised into social norms (Heyzer, 1996). These fora have not only sensitised the world on the plight of

girl-children but have also helped to place girl-children's rights and needs on the human development agenda. These conferences have reiterated the need to combat poverty and exploitation suffered by girl-children world-wide (Germain and Kyte 1995). They also drew attention to the vulnerability of the girl-child because she experiences double disadvantage; firstly, as various forms of discrimination are interwoven in socio-cultural practices by reason of their sex, and secondly, she is faced with the greatest burden of poverty disease and neglect as a child (Umbina, 1994; Ogidi, 1997). The world's girls are placed in perilous situations, as gender inequity is deeply ingrained in their lives from birth. A wide range of violent or discriminatory practices compromise girls' health and shrink their chances for productive development.

In sub-Saharan Africa, societal and parental discrimination against girls in education is reflected in the lower rate of school enrolment for girls (World Bank, 1990). In most Third World countries, the girl-child is treated as an unwanted child, exposed to physical neglect, discrimination which often becomes child-abuse (UNICEF, 1993). A number of studies have indicated that girls suffered cumulative disadvantages from birth up to about age fourteen, a time most of them are married off, thereby precipitating a similar cycle in their own offspring (UNICEF, 1993). Despite the consistent patterns of discrimination, there are variations in multi-ethnic societies and between countries due to various factors. This explains the need to investigate the situation of the girl-child within a socio-cultural context because the factors that determine the disadvantaged position of the girl-child are closely associated with the cultural values and norms of the group in question.

FGM; the ritual cutting and removal of part or all of the clitoris and other external genitalia, affects an estimated two million girls, and women each year, mainly in Africa. Most commonly, the girls undergo the ritual within the first week of life and at the age of eight years (Toubia, 1995). Girls have access to health care. Studies show boys outnumbering girls at diarrhoea treatment centres (Chen et al, 1981). Early marriages compromise the health and autonomy of millions of young girls. It leads to early maternity, further undermining the health of the girls. Early maternity also deprives girls of education, foreclosing their hopes for future employment. In many parts of the developing world, a significant number of brides are younger than 15. Girls are frequent targets for sexual abuse, in part because they lack the status and education to advocate for themselves, especially in negotiating abstinence and protected sex. Families invest in sons in many parts of the world because they look to them as potential earners as well as sources for future support. And daughters are often considered as sources of economic liabilities, nevertheless, they provide household and workplace labour so valuable that

families cannot spare them for the education that would so drastically improve their economic and social status (Vlasoff, 1990).

In Nigeria, there is a dearth of reliable research and information on the particular problems and situations encountered by the girl-child while available literatures focused on children generally (Umbina, 1994). There has not been any research-based documentary evidence of girl-child status in the country. In a society like Nigeria with many sub-cultures, it is to be expected that the girl-child's are accorded different status depending on the prevailing culture. Hence; the need to document the position and treatment of girl-children in different ethnic groups of the country. A deeper understanding of the girl-child situation should involve the community.

The following questions are pertinent:

1. How does an Igbo community perceive the status and rights of a girl-child?
2. What are the patterns of the treatment of the girl-child in Igbo land?

To eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl-child, increase public awareness of the value of female children and improve their welfare in regard to health, nutrition and education, this research is urgently needed. This study therefore investigates in-depth the situation of girl-children in the Abakaliki area of Ebonyi State in South-Eastern Nigeria.

## **Methodology**

### **Area of Study**

The survey area is in the recently created Ebonyi State, in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. The State is among the six states newly created by the Federal Military Government of Nigeria on October 1, 1996. The inhabitants are Igbos. It is made up of Abakaliki and Afikpo Zones. While the Abakaliki Zone made up of six local governments was formerly in old Enugu State, the Afikpo Zone was in the old Abia State. The Abakaliki Zone is chosen for this study because it has a long history of neglect and backwardness. It is a farming community. Out of the six local government areas in the Abakaliki Zone, we wittingly selected three Local Government areas namely Abakaliki, Ishielu and Ofiaukwu Local Government areas.

The sampling strategy adopted for the study was cluster sampling. The basic elements are outlined below. The first stage of the sampling was to select an urban area and a rural area from each of the Local Government areas selected. The areas selected include: Abakaliki Local Government Area: (with Abakaliki town as the urban area and the Nkaliki village as the rural area);



Ishielu Local Government Area: (Ezillo town as the urban and Ezza Ezillo as the rural community) and Ohaukwu Local Government Area (with Ezzamgbo as the urban area and Ngbo Okpocfii Efioku as the rural area). The rural areas are not more than 20 Km from the urban sites.

The areas selected were divided into clusters of households or blocks, and a cluster was randomly selected in each. In the clusters selected, all the dwelling units were identified and numbered. The adult men and women and female children who fall within the age bracket of interest in the selected clusters were identified and interviewed.

For the six communities selected from the three local government areas, we selected 1,488 adults. This means that in each Local Government area we selected and interviewed 496 adult men and women. Data were collected principally using three techniques: namely, the questionnaire administration, in-depth interview and focus group discussions. In-depth interviews were conducted with a number of selected people who fall into the group of interest. The data collection was done in August 1997 in the area of study.

**Research Findings**

**Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Adult Respondents**

Table 1 shows some basic characteristics of the respondents included in the sample. One-third of the respondents are from each of the Local Government areas selected for this study. About 56% of the respondents were drawn from the urban areas, while 45% live in the rural areas. Also 51 % are men and 49 % are women. The mean age of the respondents is 37 years. A quarter of the respondents did not go to school, 27% had primary education 29 percent had secondary education and about 19 percent had tertiary education.

In terms of occupational status, 27% are farmers, 25% are civil servant, and 36% are traders. More than one-quarter of the respondents go to the mainline protestant churches like the Anglican and Methodist Churches, and more than one-third are Roman Catholics, 15% are Pentecostal groups and 15% are traditional religious groups.

Regarding marital status, 63.4% are married and 29% single. Spouse’s education level indicates that one-third are not educated; 29.7% attended primary school 25% attended secondary school and the rest had had tertiary education.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of adult respondents by selected socio-economic and demographic characteristics, Abakaliki, 1998

| Characteristics                       | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Local government area of study</b> |            |
| Abakaliki LGA                         | 32.1 (478) |
| Ishielu LGA                           | 34.5 (513) |
| Ohaukwu LGA                           | 33.4 (497) |
| <b>Place of residence</b>             |            |
| Urban                                 | 55.5 (826) |
| Rural                                 | 44.5 (662) |
| <b>Sex of respondent</b>              |            |
| Male                                  | 51.2 (762) |
| Female                                | 48.8 (726) |
| <b>Level of Education</b>             |            |
| None                                  | 25.1 (371) |
| Primary                               | 26.7 (395) |
| Secondary                             | 29.4 (436) |
| Tertiary                              | 18.8 (259) |

Table 2: percent distribution of respondents by responses to various questions on traditional practices affecting the girl child, Abakaliki Nigeria, 1998

|                                             |            |
|---------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Occupation</b>                           |            |
| Farming                                     | 26.8 (389) |
| Artisan                                     | 8.6 (125)  |
| Domestic work                               | 10.1 (147) |
| Civil service                               | 24.9 (362) |
| Trading                                     | 36.1 (524) |
| Others                                      | 3.7 (54)   |
| <b>Religion</b>                             |            |
| Traditional Religion                        | 18.7 (276) |
| Protestant Churches (Anglicans, Methodists) | 28.8 (425) |
| Catholic Christians                         | 37.2 (548) |
| Others(Pentecostal Groups)                  | 15.3 (226) |
| <b>Marital Status</b>                       |            |
| Single                                      | 29.2 (428) |
| Married                                     | 63.4 (930) |
| Separated                                   | 2.2 (32)   |
| Divorced                                    | 2.7 (40)   |
| Widowed                                     |            |
| <b>Spouse's Education</b>                   |            |
| None                                        | 21.8 (218) |
| Primary                                     | 29.7 (295) |
| Secondary                                   | 27.6 (274) |
| Tertiary                                    | 16.4 (163) |

**Table 2: percent distribution of respondents by responses to various question on traditional practices affecting the girl child, Abakaliki Nigeria, 199:**

|                                                                                  |                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Traditional Practices</b>                                                     | <b>Percentage (frequency)</b> |
| Average family size                                                              | 5.2                           |
| Average number of girl-children not schooling                                    | 1.5                           |
| <b>Reasons for not attending School</b>                                          |                               |
| Financial constraints                                                            | 32.3 (21)                     |
| Personal choice                                                                  | 1.5 (1)                       |
| Had enough education                                                             | 6.2 (4)                       |
| Girl-child education is not necessary                                            | 3.1 (2)                       |
| A girl is another man's property                                                 | 51.1 (35)                     |
| <b>Early Marriage</b>                                                            |                               |
| Mean age girls are given out in marriage                                         | 17.0 years                    |
| <b>Girl-rights over choice of partner</b>                                        |                               |
| Percent who have ever married off a daughter against her will                    | 10.1 (136)                    |
| Percent who know people who have married off girls against their will            | 46.2 (646)                    |
| <b>Female Genital Mutilation</b>                                                 |                               |
| Percent of adults who have admitted female circumcision is practised in the area | 66.5 (946)                    |
| <b>Reasons for FGM</b>                                                           |                               |
| To prevent pregnancy and delivery problems                                       | 2.5 (24)                      |
| Tradition/Custom                                                                 | 48.3 (457)                    |
| To reduce sexual urge and promiscuity                                            | 32.6 (308)                    |
| To beautify the female organ                                                     | 1.5 (14)                      |
| To avoid child deaths                                                            | 6.3 (60)                      |
| NR/DK                                                                            | 8.8 (83)                      |
| <b>Female Genital Mutilation Practitioners</b>                                   |                               |
| Traditional birth attendants                                                     | 20.3 (182)                    |
| Nurses                                                                           | 17.2 (154)                    |
| Doctors                                                                          |                               |
| Adult women                                                                      | 51.1 (458)                    |
| Don't know/NR                                                                    | 7.6 (72)                      |
| <b>Place of Female Genital Mutilation</b>                                        |                               |
| Hospital                                                                         | 18.3 (169)                    |
| TBA's Home                                                                       | 17.1 (158)                    |
| Parents' House                                                                   | 60.0 (553)                    |
| Others                                                                           | 3.4 (32)                      |
| Don't know/No Response                                                           | 3.4 (32)                      |
| Food Taboos                                                                      | 13.1 (195)                    |

The respondents indicated that the age at marriage in Abakaliki is 17, below the nationally recommended age of 18 years. Thus, early marriage is prevalent in the Abakaliki area. Table 2 also shows that 10 percent of the respondents have married off their girl-children against their will, while 48 percent said they know people/friends who have married off their daughters against their will. Reasons for this action were not sought. But knowledge of the area shows that in most cases where parents are hard pressed financially they do give out their daughters in marriage to any man willing and ready to pay. In some areas, a girl is betrothed to a man whom the family selects, whether she likes it or not. She has no option.

Female Genital Mutilation involves the ritual removal of all or part of the clitoris and other external genitalia. This too is common in Abakaliki as 67 % of the adult respondents acknowledged the practice. Various reasons are given for the practice of FGM. These include “it is a tradition that cannot die” (48.3 %), “to prevent and reduce sexual promiscuity” (33%), for easy delivery when pregnant (10.5%) while 8.8% claimed they did not know the reason for the practice.

Female Genital Mutilation practitioners are elderly adult women (51 %); TBAs (20.3 %, nurses (17.2%) and doctors (8.9%). It is surprising that nurses and doctors are also involved in female genital mutilation practice. FGM in Abakaliki zone of Ebonyi state is commonly done at the house of the parents of the girl-child as 60% indicated so, followed by the hospital (18.3%) and TBAs’s house (17%).

Another identified traditional practice in the area affecting the girl-child is food taboos. Thirteen percent of the respondents reported the existence of food inhibition for the girls. This means that there are certain food items the girls are not allowed to eat in the area. Further probing of the type of food and the reasons for the inhibition shows that the food tabooed includes those used in sacrifices which tradition believes a woman should not eat. There is no nutritional reason why the girls are prohibited from taking these foods. However, it is a clear case of denial of rights.

### **Attitude to Female Genital Mutilation**

To examine the attitude of the respondents to the practice of Female Genital Mutilation, questions were asked on whether the practice should continue or not and reasons for whatever answer is given. This is shown on Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Distribution of respondents by responses to questions on attitudes to Female Genital Mutilation, Abakaliki, 1999**

| Questions and Responses                | Percentage        |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Must FGM Continue?</b>              |                   |
| FGM should continue                    | 53.1(502)         |
| <b>Reasons why FGM should continue</b> |                   |
| To reduce sexual urge and promiscuity  | 35.9 (180)        |
| Develop problems later in life         | 0.4 (2)           |
| Tradition cannot die                   | 43.2 (217)        |
| Marks maturity attainment              | 3.8 (19)          |
| Uncircumcised is ridiculed             | 2.9 (15)          |
| It affects delivery if not done        | 5.8 (29)          |
| Don't Know/No Response                 | 7.9 (40)          |
| FGM Should discontinue                 | 46.9 (444)        |
| <b>Reasons for discontinuation</b>     |                   |
| Very dangerous to health               | 52.1 (231)        |
| It is not necessary or important       | 22.3 (99)         |
| Tradition is not static                | 20.7 (92)         |
| Don't know/No response                 | 4.8 (21)          |
| <b>FGM Celebrated in the community</b> | <b>45.5 (430)</b> |

On whether the practice of FGM should continue or not, more than half of the respondents (53%) insisted that the practice should continue, as according to them, “our traditions cannot die (49%) and “the continued practice of FGM should reduce the urge for sexual promiscuity (24%)”. Also 47 percent said FGM should not continue because it is bad and dangerous to the health of the child (52%) and is not necessary or important (22%). Even though the practice is widespread in the area, adult women in an FGD session indicated that the practice was slowly dying in Ohaukwu VGA. They explained that because of the bad effect of FGM, churches and other groups in the area are mobilising women against the practice. One of the reasons for the FGM according to the respondents is the belief that any girl not circumcised shall not be capable of giving birth to children. Despite campaigns by churches against it, the practice persists in the interior parts of the community. On age, the FGD participants said “the age they reach for this to take place is 15 years” i.e. regarded as maturity age although there are variations. There is a celebration of female genital mutilation in the area as indicated by 46 percent of the respondents.

### **Girl-Child Rights**

The issue of the rights of female children; that is whether a girl-child has any right in the family either to property or to education, was also investigated. Asked whether female children have any right to their parents’ property Table



4 shows that 23 % of the adult respondents said female children inherit property while 71 % said it is not done. Reasons given for girls not being given family property rights include: “girls do not belong to the family, they will eventually marry out” (58%) tradition (16%) and inheritance is the only prerogative of males (11 %).

Nineteen percent indicated that there is a formula to share property among the male and female children of deceased parents. The pattern is male children will first receive theirs (58%) then by age of the children (21 %) and on maternal line, if the man has many wives (4.6%). On another question, how the property of a deceased man is shared among his children, 46% said that only males get a share; by the will of the man or family decision (22.8%). In fact, 53 percent of the respondents said that girl-children have absolutely nothing from the parents’ property.

**Table 4: Percent distribution of respondents by responses to question on girl-child property rights, Abakaliki, 1999**

| Questions                                                                             | Percentage |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Percent said it is proper for female children to inherit property                     | 23.1(343)  |
| Percent said it is improper for girls to inherit father's property                    | 70.0(1052) |
| No response                                                                           | 6.3(93)    |
| <b>If improper, why?</b>                                                              |            |
| Only male children are entitled                                                       | 10.8(144)  |
| It is the tradition                                                                   | 15.5(163)  |
| Girls do not belong to the family                                                     | 57.6(606)  |
| Others                                                                                | 10.0(105)  |
| No response                                                                           | 19.2(285)  |
| <b>How is the property of a deceased man shared among girl children in this area?</b> |            |
| Only the males get share                                                              | 46.3(689)  |
| Shared between males and females                                                      | 4.7(73)    |
| It is not a fixed rule but flexible                                                   | 0.9(14)    |
| According to the age of the children                                                  | 12.8(188)  |
| Along maternal line                                                                   | 3.0(45)    |
| Others (by Written will or family decision)                                           | 22.8(340)  |
| No response                                                                           | 9.3(139)   |
| <b>What does the girl-child get from the father's property?</b>                       |            |
| Absolutely nothing                                                                    | 53.2(791)  |
| Cooking utensils                                                                      | 9.1(136)   |
| Domestic plants and animals                                                           | 2.9(43)    |
| Anything given to her at her wedding                                                  | 18.8(280)  |
| No response                                                                           | 18.0(238)  |

### Male-Child Preferences

The perilous state of the girl-child has been attributed to the traditional preference for male children who are always thought to be the ones to continue the family lineage. The preference for male-children manifests itself in various forms in traditional societies. In order to assess the extent to which this is true in the Abakaliki area of Igboiland, a series of questions were asked.

For instance: (1) Do you celebrate the birth of a girl-child? (2) Do you celebrate the birth of a male child in your community? (3) Would men in your community quarrel with their wives if they have no male child? (4) Personally, would you try to have a male child if you have none? (5) Would you try to have a female child if you have none? (6) Is it proper for a male child in your community to do domestic duties? Analysis of these questions is shown on Table 5.

**Table 5: Percent distribution of respondents by response to questions on male child preference behaviour in Abakaliki Zone, 1999**

| <b>Male Child preference Behaviour</b>                                             | <b>Percentage</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Percent who celebrate the birth of a girl-child                                    | 28.2(420)         |
| <b>Reasons Why The Birth of A Girl-Child Is Celebrated</b>                         |                   |
| They are gifts from God                                                            | 54.1(224)         |
| They are symbols of good fortune                                                   | 14.7(61)          |
| Do not know                                                                        | 4.1(17)           |
| No response                                                                        | 27.1(112)         |
| Percent who celebrate the birth of a boy-child specially                           | 41.3(615)         |
| Percent of men who would quarrel with the wife if only girls are born              | 65.5(974)         |
| Percent that would try personally to have a male child if none is available        | 60.6(901)         |
| Percent that would try to have a female child if none is available                 | 47.4(706)         |
| Percent who said it is proper for male children to do household duties             | 53.4(795)         |
| <b>Reasons Why a Boy Should Do Domestic Duties</b>                                 |                   |
| Where there is no girl                                                             | 6.4(51)           |
| Everybody should be treated equally                                                | 68.3(543)         |
| Others (e.g. As a preparation ground)                                              | 35.3(302)         |
| <b>If Lack of Funds Who among Your Children Will you Send to Hospital and Why?</b> |                   |
| The Boy-child will be sent                                                         | 12.4(185)         |
| <b>Reasons</b>                                                                     |                   |
| They are my children                                                               | 4.3(8)            |
| Boys will continue my family                                                       | 62.2(115)         |
| They need medical attention                                                        | 2.7(5)            |
| Girls are not important                                                            | 10.3(19)          |
| Other reasons                                                                      | 16.2(30)          |
| No response                                                                        | 4.3(8)            |
| The Girl-child will be sent                                                        | 3.6(53)           |
| None will be sent                                                                  | 38.9(49)          |
| Both will be sent                                                                  | 25.0(242)         |

The table shows that 28 % of the respondents do celebrate the birth of a girl-child in a special way because girls are a gift from God, while 41.3% do celebrate the birth of a male child. More of the respondents will celebrate the birth of a male child than the birth of a girl-child. About 66% of the respondents indicated that men in their area will quarrel with their wives if there is no male child. Thus, about 7 out of every 10 men will pick quarrel



with their wives if they bear only girls. Also, 61 % would personally try as much as possible to have a male child if they have none, while only 47% said they would personally try to get a female child if they have none. All these show clearly the preference and importance attached to male children in the area.

The respondents were asked to indicate who they will send to hospital for medical attention among their children when they are sick, 12.4 percent indicated they will send only the boys because the boys will continue their lineage (62.2%) and that the girls are not important (10.3%). Those that will send the girl-child said the girls are important also. The pattern of responses shows that many will send boys instead of the girls, while 65 percent will send both of them because they are all children and none should be allowed to die.

## **Discussion of Findings**

The primary objective of this study is to document the status of the girl-child in Abakaliki area of Ebonyi State with a view to having scientific information on the patterns, prevalence, knowledge of and community attitudes to traditional practices affecting the girl-child.

The analysis indicated that Abakaliki parents will marry out their daughters at an age less than 18 years. Marital partners for both males and females are often chosen by the parents or by the children with the approval of the parents. The boy-children are given more freedom to choose their girl partners than the girls. In fact, the community respondents believe that the marriage of the boy-child outside the ethnic group will make for more unity than a girl-child marrying outside the ethnic group. Parents regulate the rights of the girl-child to select a marriage partner. Among the Igbos, the fear of the Osu Outcast system is still common. The so-called free-born will not be allowed to marry an Osu. Somebody becomes an Osu in Igboland if his forebears were said to be sacrificed to idols. Such families can never be allowed to marry those from a free from family. This is one reason why parents and relations will always be more interested in whom their children are marrying. In fact once an intention is made known, both families will set up secret investigations into the background of each of the families whether they are Osu or family of questionable character.

There is a high prevalence level of Female Genital Mutilation in the area. Sixty-seven percent of the adult respondents indicated the practice of FGM is common in the area. The traditional circumcisers are adult women, traditional birth attendants, nurses and doctors. FGM operation is usually done at the house of the parents of the child to be circumcised, and this is mostly done in

the early hours of the day. There are variations in the age of female circumcision. The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data sets indicates that in some cases, the circumcision could be done within the 8th day of the birth of the girl-child and in other places it is from ten years or when the girl is being prepared for marriage. The reasons given for this practice in Abakaliki include the need to reduce sexual urge and promiscuity of the girls. It is believed among the Igbos that a girl not circumcised will be a wayward girl and will be sexually promiscuous. Others indicated that the practice is their tradition and it is done to guarantee the safety of the mother and the child during delivery.

Ceremonies accompany the practice of FGM in the area. Women in a focus group discussion said “ceremonies are performed when a girl is circumcised. The first thing is that the girl matures, a goat will be killed for her. After there will be a preparation of the day for the circumcision. After the circumcision, if the girl is not married, a cloth will be tied around her waist. The person will rub a reddish powder (“Uhie”), after that she will be decorated. When all these have taken place at that time, there will be dancing, she shall proceed to the outside (village square) where she shall dance to the joy of everyone. This takes place irrespective of her marital status. If she is not married this will be a period for prospective suitors to decide if the celebrant suits them. If that is the right case, a prospective suitor will place his gun on her as she is dancing and release the riffle indicating that she is his wife. That has been our tradition and it persists today even though it is diminishing.

A second participant added: “A person who has more money will kill a cow. When the circumcision process is over, at the period that the ‘Uhie’ the traditional red powder would be washed off, people will be called to gather at a designated place. Dancers are also invited. Every kind of food will be prepared and served. After the washing, the girl is made to dance. it is mandatory that any girl born in our community must dance. It is after the dancing that you have reached the full age of recognition and maturity”.

In one of the Local Government areas, non-literate men in an FGD session summarised the practice of FGM in the area as follows: “Female circumcision is being practised there both at home and in the hospital (maternity home). The reason for female circumcision is to reduce the girls’ sexual urge so that they will not be impregnated easily. It is a common tradition around the area and it is believed to be important for everyone. It is after the circumcision of a girl that such a girl is considered mature for marriage. The part removed is either buried or hung on the tree with a rope and the girl will be decorated for a dance at the public. Ceremonies associated involve wining and dining, killing of goats, cows and pigs and then the bathing

ceremony is observed. At such times, it is symbolic of a girl getting ready to go to her husband's house after having served the parents faithfully. It can be done seven days after birth or around 18-20 years as the case may be. “

In Ishielu VGA, literate men in an FGD session commented thus: “Female circumcision is common and it can be the early type or later one, when the girl is about going for marriage. It helps in procreation and for easy delivery during child-birth. Female circumcision is also a means of displaying wealth and so a status symbol as there is merriment associated with the practice. It helps to curb the problem of sexual promiscuity and any girl not formally circumcised is looked upon as an abominable thing.

The picture in this area is that circumcision is prevalent; practised at different times, some within days of birth and others when the girl is about to marry. FGM is more prevalent in the rural areas of the Abakaliki.

Attitudes to the practice of FGM are changing, however. Sixty-six percent of the adults would want the practice to be discontinued because it has dangerous implications for the health of the girl-child. However, information from the focus group discussion sessions indicates that while some of the participants did not circumcise their daughters, others see it as an abomination for a girl to be circumcised. The practice is generally seen to be on the increase despite the campaign against it by the churches.

13% of the adults said that there are some food taboos in the area. For example, the girl-child is not allowed to eat gizzard and the head of a fowl or idolised foods. There is no clear-cut denial of proteinous foods based on sex.

In terms of the girl-child's rights a majority of the adults respondents said that it is improper in Abakaliki for any girl to inherit the father's property because the girls are bound to marry out of the family, and so they have no share in the family. They can only exercise their rights in their husband's homes- rights that are determined by the number of male children they have. For among the Igbo people, if a woman has no male child, she can only use her husband's property as long as she is alive and still living with the family. Ordinarily, an Igbo woman has no inheritance rights both in her father's house and in her husband's house. There is an existing method for sharing the deceased property among his family members in the community. This formula clearly excludes the girl-child. The property is either shared out to the male-children or on maternal basis, if the man has more than one wife. The property will be shared among the women. The children of each of the women will take their mother's share and divide it among the male children of that woman. The girl-child gets nothing.

Supporting the above findings, non-literate adult men in an FGD session in Ohaukwu VGA said:

*“There is no inheritance for the girl-child if the father dies, except when the mother dies. When the man dies, the first son and the rest of the sons share their father’s property, if the man has only one wife. Actually a girl has no right to her father’s inheritance; she only has a right in her husband’s family where she will be married to”.*

The literate men in another focus group discussion said:

*“anything given to the girl-child by the parents remains hers even after the death of the man, especially if there is no wicked person among the people. Some girls get their own share during the circumcision ceremony but not landed property like houses, trees, etc. If the mother of the girl dies, she has a right to some of her mother’s movable property like clothes, goats”.*

In Ezillo, another group of adult men noted that there is no inheritance for female children because they belong to other communities. This position is shared by all the FGD groups and in-depth interviews.

Son preference is manifested in various forms, as 41 percent of the adult respondents reported that a special celebration is always held for the birth of a boy-child. When there is no money in the family, 12 percent of the adults indicated that they would send their male children to hospital instead of the girls because “the boys will continue my lineage”. Preference for male children is also shown when the majority of the respondents said they will quarrel with their partners if no male child is produced and the respondents reported that they will do anything to make sure they have a male child.

An Opinion leader in an in-depth interview summarised the position of the community on son preference thus:

*It’s a taboo for you to go in any family and discover that you’ve no male child. It is a serious problem and so parents prefer having (more) male children. The reason is that to assume full status as a man, you must have male children to stand in your stead when you go (die). Yes, we regard girl-children as another person’s property that will eventually be married out. They assume no responsibility if their father is not alive”.*

A woman opinion leader noted also:

*“male children give honour to their parents even when they are grown. This is an African phenomenon. When a male child is born, people begin to scream that you have given birth to someone to replace the father”.*

Adult men FGD participants in Ezillo said:

*‘If I marry and have any girls for up to three without a male child in fact I will not be happy. But a parent who has 6 males or boys and no girl in their midst, that man is the happiest man. Why? Because he has gotten his ‘soldiers’. In fact these will protect his family ... he is alright now because of male representatives that will take care of him after his death.... ‘*

## **Conclusion**

The study highlights some of the socio-cultural factors that influence traditional practices against the girl-child in the Abakaliki area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The study shows the reasons for the continued practice of some of the traditional customs that affect the girl-child. For instance Female Genital Mutilation is believed to discourage girls from engaging in pre-marital sex and prepare them for marriage. Although many people think the practice should be stopped because of its harmful effects, others believe it is essential for the moral development of the girls. Efforts towards the eradication of Female Genital Mutilation and other harmful traditional practices against the girl-child should be geared towards more focused educational campaigns aimed at the community generally.

The policy implications of this study are obvious. Government agencies, non-governmental agencies and other community-based areas should mobilise and intensify efforts at improving the status of the girl-child in Abakaliki area of Ebonyi State. The issue of the rights of the girl-child to her parents’ property should begin to attract the attention of the government. There is need to enact legislation promoting the girl-child’s rights in all ramifications. Investment on girls’ education should be encouraged and undue emphasis on son preference is de-emphasised. Parents should be encouraged to invest on their girl-child. The Nigerian government Family Support Programme, Family Economy Advancement Programme (FEAP) and Family Support Basic Education Scheme for Women should be executed as to reach the grass-roots girl-child. As the world gets set for the next millennium, there is an urgent need to set up machineries that will be used to improve the status of the female children in various cultures so that the female children will utilise their potentials in the next millennium.

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### Welcome Speech (Paul Nchoji Nkwi)

#### Welcome Speech

Paul Nchoji Nkwi,

President of the Pan African Anthropological Association (PAAA)

Eminent Founding Members present  
Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences,  
Minister of Social Welfare, Republic of Togo  
President of Wenner Gren Foundation,  
Rector of the University of Yaounde,  
Fellow members of the PAAA  
Dear Students  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Ten years ago, in this same city, was born the Pan African Anthropological Association (PAAA). Today, it gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to this historic occasion which marks a decade of intense activities and offers us the opportunity to look to the future with optimism.

When the founding members toyed around with the idea of establishing a continental organization in 1988, little did we know that ten years from then, such a dream will come true. The 12th International congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (ICAES) held in Zagreb gave Africans attending that congress to think seriously about the problems plaguing anthropology in Africa. At the time of its creation most of our colleagues were operating «underground» in departments of social sciences, calling ourselves sociologists or social science analysts in order to gain acceptability in an academic world hostile to the discipline. Its utilitarian value did not even save the discipline from the hyper-criticism of social philosophers, political scientists and African nationalists.

The picture is still vivid in my mind of the Zagreb Congress. When I read a statement in the name of all Africans attending the congress, at the Permanent Council of the IUAES, calling on the world anthropological community to assist African scholars to emerge from professional isolation, one person who responded to our call was Dr. Sydel Silverman, President of

Wenner Gren Foundation. When we walked out of the hall, she came up to me and said: Are you really serious? I said, yes. With the assistance of her Foundation, we organised the first inaugural conference here in Yaounde in 1989. She was personally present at the launching and today, she is here to celebrate these ten years with us. If the PAAA has survived these long years, it is thanks to the commitment of her Foundation which has spared no effort in seeing that PAAA grows. This present conference and all the other conferences have been financed by her Foundation and we want to acknowledge this and hope she will transmit our sentiments of gratitude to her Board of Trustees. We want also to honour her husband, who accompanied her on that first occasion and became a founding associate member, and who is no more, with a minutes of silence.

Many governments, foundations and international organisations have also accompanied us during these long years especially Governments of Cameroon, Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, Benin and Netherlands. We are also deeply grateful to foundation and international organisations that assisted us. These include Carnegie Corporation of New York, The Rockefeller Foundation, IDRC, UNESCO, UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF, the World Bank, APFT.

It is our guess that the lost decades of Africa's development proved abundantly clear that the neglect of some disciplines and expertise made it impossible to achieve sustainable development. Different development models and paradigms designed in the North and based on certain theoretical assumptions failed to make a difference through the 60s, 70s and a greater part of the 80s. Indeed, the 1990s opened a window of opportunity to anthropology and offered the association, an opportunity of bringing the discipline's unique insights to the development enterprise. The concept of participation developed and applied by the synchronic approach to culture had failed to gain currency in the first three decades of Africa's development endeavour. Today, the concept has gained acceptance and has led to its use and misuse by NGOS and others who have suddenly discovered what we, in anthropology, had always believed in. Post-modernism with its multi-voices concept seem to capture the minds of African intellectuals but many have failed to understand that the anthropological theory of cultural relativism was many years ahead of today's postmodernists.

Africa is still a vast laboratory of anthropological research which attracts scholars from all over the world. Historically, anthropology contributed in building a database on Africa during the period of colonisation. The 1960s and 1970s saw the withdrawal of many Africanists from active ethnographic research. Having placed anthropological research on hold during those difficult decades, they are now coming back in full force. The birth of

Association of Africanist Anthropology (AfM) and the Association for the anthropology for change and development (APAD) in the 1990s are concrete example of how Africanists in the north are organizing themselves to re-invade Africa ethnographically. The winds of the internationalization of theory with its global tenets risk marginalizing our efforts on the continent. We can only be part of this process, if we work around specific research themes that have wide comparability. Our Association must explore this avenue whose outcome may bring Africa's contribution to international debate.

The PAAA believes in a constructive partnership of mutual respect and equality. Our northern colleagues must realize that partnership must be the hallmark of any future action at all levels. The African anthropological community must invest in this approach. The participation of the North in mentoring and the capacity building endeavours must constitute a critical domain of partnership on which the contributions of Africa to world anthropology will depend. We are grateful to many Africanists who have individually shaped the emerging image and vision of the Pan African Anthropological Association. They have enhanced our presence and visibility.

As Africans are increasing defining research agendas in their respective countries our partners in the north must be part of the process. We had hope that AFM, APAD and other emerging efforts will participate in laying down guiding rules of our partnership. The principle of «divide and rule» must be eliminated from our vocabulary, actions and words. We must work together. The decades ahead should offer new opportunities for dialogue and collective efforts in the promotion of the anthropology of Africa by both African and Africanist.

Furthermore, the teaching of anthropology must meet the demands of a changing world. The political commitment and conviction of many African governments has given anthropology an important a role in the development process. This has also led to the expansion of few anthropology courses in African universities to degree levels. Many more departments of anthropology or at least a joint department with separate degrees are being created. The rehabilitation of the discipline is on the way and its effectiveness will depend on our performance. The restructuring of the discipline and the redesigning of teaching programs is fundamental but we must adopt a more multi-disciplinary approach because a true multi-disciplinary dialogue will be instrumental in meeting the challenges of the future and the demands of the 21st century.

In the name of all founding members, I want to thank all of you for becoming part of the dream. The road has been difficult and many of you have assisted us in overcoming these problems. As we celebrate the 10th anniversary, let us look to the future with greater enthusiasm and vision. We

must pay more attention to the training of a new crop of young scholars who will become the vanguard of excellence in the Anthropology of Africa. The intensification of the training programs of the PAAA is key, and we must collectively and individually work closely together.

Have a good conference

## Opening Remarks to Pan African Association of Anthropologists

**Sydel Silverman,**

President Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research,  
Inc., New York, N. Y.

It is a great pleasure to be with you on this significant occasion, the tenth anniversary of the Pan African Association of Anthropologists. I bring you the greetings and good wishes of the Board of Trustees of the Wenner Gren Foundation and the international community of anthropologists whom the Foundation serves. For those of you who may not be familiar with the Foundation, it was established in 1941 by a gift of the Swedish industrialist Axel Leonard Wenner-Gren, who owned the Electrolux Company; you may be amused at the thought of nearly sixty years of research and discussion resting atop stock in vacuum cleaners. Those “dirt collectors” have served us well, as it has enabled us to carry out our work without seeking funds from any governmental or private source, and thus to maintain our independence.

The Foundation has always been devoted entirely to the support of research in anthropology, defined in the broadest sense to encompass all the fields of research included under designation in different countries. Most importantly, it is dedicated to anthropology as an international discipline and has always taken on a special role in the furtherance of that internationalism. It was as part of that international mission of the Wenner-Gren Foundation that we became involved in the creation of what was to become this association.

Some of you will recall that it all began at the International Congress of 1988 in Zagreb, then Yugoslavia, where I met the small group of African anthropologists able to attend the Congress. When Paul Nkwi, with the assistance of Wenner-Gren, then assembled a group of delegates from 23 countries in Yaounde in September of 1989, it was not at all clear that it would be possible to form an association, much less that it could endure. As you all know, there were many lines of division and barriers to communication among anthropologists from the different countries of Africa, and the economic and practical hurdles would have discouraged a less stalwart group. But the association was created, in a spirit of good will, determination, and optimism, and it has flourished to bring us to this anniversary celebration.

For me as a cultural anthropologist, it was especially gratifying at the Yaounde meeting in 1989 to hear African colleagues assertively declaring themselves to be anthropologists, after a history in which that identity was not acknowledged because of its colonialist associations. It was clear that you saw

anthropology not only as a research enterprise of great value but also as one that could be of service to your own societies. So the Association was born of two parents: the scholarly, knowledge tradition of anthropology, and the commitment of this generation to use that knowledge for the benefit of African peoples. It is my impression that the conjoining of these two parents has produced a distinctive, African anthropology.

My own life has seen many transitions in the past ten years. I became a mother-in-law twice, a grandmother, and this year a widow. In my work at Wenner Gren, I watched the Foundation bloom from a rather uncertain situation, having only recently emerged from a period of financial and organisational difficulty, to become a thriving influence on the field of anthropology. The core programs of research grants and conferences expanded; the then-fledgling program of fellowships for advanced students from developing countries grew to produce a substantial number of trained anthropologists who have returned to work in their own countries; we initiated a new program of international collaborative research grants to encourage partnerships between scholars from different parts of the world. Ten years ago, South Africa was a world apart, and even after it broke the thrall of apartheid there was considerable suspicion on the part of some of you as to whether you could ever accept anthropologists from that country as colleagues; today you are all part of one African community.

This anniversary moment is also my opportunity to bid you farewell as president of the Wenner-Gren Foundation, as I will be retiring from that position at the end of 1999. I will not retire from anthropology, of course, and will continue to do research, to write and to express my views; I will bestow upon myself a new title, Anthropologist-At-Large. I am happy to report that a superb successor has been selected, Richard Fox, who is already well known to you as the editor of *Current Anthropology*. I am confident that he will carry forward the goals that I have tried to set in place.

i would now like to reflect a bit on what has happened• in anthropology in these past ten years. I want to point to some of the trends that I have observed. None, however, represents a point of conclusion, and each one embodies a set of challenges for the future.

First and foremost is a development that you in this audience have helped to Shape: the increasing internationalisation of anthropology. Everywhere in the world today, in all the places where anthropologists have long gone to carry out their studies, perhaps looking to local talent for field assistants, there are professional anthropologists. What this means is that the only possible model for future research will be one of collaboration between equal partners.



This is the principle that Wenner Gren has tried to advance in our International Collaborative Research program.

As part of this internationalisation, there are now professional organisations, like your own, on every continent. Despite the difficulties faced by many, these organisations have become more confident and more autonomous. As was the case for the PAAA, their goal is to cut across national boundaries while creating links within a region, to be able to develop shared interests and to meet from time to time.

In these years, we have seen a vast change in the possibilities for increased communication, which is breaking down the barriers within and between different regions of the world. The Age of the Internet makes communication practicable without travel (although there is still a need for face-to-face contact). This change also offers the most realistic solution to the difficult problem of access to information. Ten years ago we despaired over the struggle to build up libraries throughout Africa; now we know that paper libraries will be by-passed by electronic modalities. (As part of this trend, *Current Anthropology* will begin to publish an electronic version next year, which among other benefits will make it possible for subscribers to get immediate access to the journal rather than awaiting it by slow mail).

We must remember, however, that internationalisation doesn't mean homogenisation. Different countries, different world regions, have built their anthropology on different academic traditions. Some derive from the four-field tradition of the United States, others from British social-structuralist or French philosophical or German empiricist bases, and all new national traditions have combined and modified such influences in different ways to respond to their own need.

A second major trend of the past ten years has been in the fact that everywhere in the world, anthropology has taken on a growing role outside the academy. Applied anthropology has expanded and assumed its rightful place alongside basic research. (What I mean in making this distinction has to do with where the research questions come from: are they set by the anthropologist based on his or her own interests, or are they defined by problems that the anthropologist is called on to help solve?) As part of this trend, anthropology has come to assume a stronger public profile in many countries, and it is gaining greater opportunity to enter into public debates and policy making.

While this role has always been central to African anthropology, it is not unique to it. In the United States, over 50% of new PhDs. must (or choose to) seek employment outside of academic institutions. Applied (or practising) anthropologists have their own associations and their own professional

identity, rather than accepting a definition of them as poor relatives to their colleagues in academia. I think this development is healthy for anthropology as a whole, but it also presents a challenge: it is vital that the two worlds be kept connected, that Communication between them be maintained, so that theory and practice can be made to enrich each other.

A third trend relates to the issue of how anthropologists define anthropology. There were, ten years ago divisions and sometimes heated disputes about what Anthropology actually consist of. These continue today; no consensus has been reached, but neither has the discipline collapsed in the face of these internal differences. "Anthropology" remains as an umbrella term and identity that covers a wide range of sub-fields and specialities. I believe that the international community of anthropologists has agreed to be tolerant of the differences and still maintain a degree of unity as anthropologists.

The dire warnings that anthropology would fragment into diverse and separate specialities have not come to pass. There are, in fact, many research areas in which links between fields have led to very fruitful results. By way of a few examples: ethnography, archaeology, and ethno history have been joined in research on many geographical areas; fields such as medical anthropology increasingly demand that biological and social-cultural data be combined; and new research questions have emerged that require the collaboration of different specialists as in the new approaches to the evolution of human society and the evolution of language.

Dire predictions that anthropology would be overtaken by an emerging hegemony of post-modernism have also not been realised. This remains an important theoretical current, especially in the United States, but there are many competing paradigms. Anthropology in general is like a bazaar of different offerings and different approaches; there is room for all, and we all benefit from the array.

A fourth trend I want to point to is the development of what is the single most important new research thrust in social and cultural anthropology, one that parallels changes in the world: namely, the interest in transnationalism and globalisation. For example, this new perspective has changed migration studies: where we used to look at "pushes" (out of the place of origin) and "pulls" (to the destination), we now are faced with situations of continuing interaction between origin and destination. In the process, states and nations themselves have changed: there are today deterritorialized states, concepts of citizenship are being redefined, and new notions of identity and ethnicity are emerging.

These changes call for different research problems than those of the past, different theories, and different methods. They do not mean that the study of local and regional phenomena is no longer relevant (remember, not everyone migrates, and not everyone is engulfed in transnational culture). They do require, however, that these phenomena be placed in relation to wider processes. We must be concerned with the global in the local, but also with the local in the global that is the way global processes get worked out in particular localities with particular social and cultural materials.

Finally, let me shift from cultural anthropology to the broader discipline to refer to one more trends, which affects us all, although it derives from developments in other scientific field. This has been the “decade of the brain,” as well as the “decade of genetics,” the result and promise of huge advances that have been made in neuroscience and genetics. These developments offer both opportunities and challenges to anthropology. Certainly, many in our discipline are benefiting from the explosion of methodologies and research findings. For instance, the new genetics is revolutionising studies of population histories and ancient society. But we must not let a new technology replace anthropological thinking. The proper interpretation of genetic data requires old-fashioned ethnography, history and ethno history, archaeology, and linguistics

More generally, advances in biological science have fuelled a trend towards biologizing in popular discourse. We have seen a resurgence of racist thinking, as in the “Bell Curve” with its notions about race and intelligence. “Hyper Darwinist” pseudoscience appears in the media almost weekly, with genetic, evolutionary explanations being offered for everything from homosexuality to aggression to promiscuity. “Tribal” warfare, as in Yugoslavia or Rwanda, is attributed to an evolutionary selection of “hardwiring” for demonizing the outgroup, ignoring historical, political, and economic causes.

Anthropologists will need to play a more active public role in tempering such claims, in challenging unacceptable inferences and in insisting that biology not be misused to rationalise social injustices or political inaction. To play this role effectively requires that anthropologists be well trained, that we keep informed of new developments in our field and those that impinge on it, and that we understand that anthropology is a tool for social action, whether we play our trade inside academia or outside it.

I now look forward to an exciting three days of learning more about anthropology in Africa.



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# Programme

SUNDAY, AUGUST 29, 1999

## ARRIVAL OF PARTICIPANTS

18H30-21H00 BUSINESS MEETING: PAAA EXECUTIVE (Hotel ROYAL)

MONDAY, AUGUST 30, 1999

07H30 ARRIVAL AND REGISTRATION OF PARTICIPANTS

09H00 OPENING CEREMONY

Speech of PAAA President: *Paul Nchoji Nkwi*

Speech by President of WennerGren Foundation: *Dr. Sydel Silverman*

Opening Speech by Rector of Univ. of Yaounde I: *Prof. J. Fame Ndong*

10H30 COFFEE BREAK

11H00 PLENARY SESSION

*Keynote Address: Prof. Andrew Spiegel*, University of Cape Town: "Teaching Anthropology and Development at the Turn of the Millenium: The Challenge of Change in Africa"

*Chairman: Paul Nchoji Nkwi* University of Yaounde I

*Rapporteur: Socpa Antoine*, University of Yaounde I

12H30 DISCUSSIONS

13H00 LUNCH

14H00 PLENARY SESSION

*Keynote Paper: Prof. Rene Devisch*, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium:

"Therapy Choice, Utilisation and Satisfaction by low Budget Health Seekers in SubSaharan and Rural Bantu"

*Chairman: ABC Ocholla Ayayo*, University of Nairobi, Kenya.

*Rapporteur: Francis Njilie*, Programme Assistant, PAAA Secretariat

15H30 COFFEE BREAK

16H00 SCIENTIFIC SESSIONS

Room 1

*Title of Session: "Teaching Anthropology in the Decades ahead"*

*Chairman: Prof. Maxwell Owusu*, University of Michigan

*Rapporteur: Messina Christophe*, University de Yaoundé I

*Ayodele Sammuuel Jegede*, University of Ibandan: "From gateway to gatekeeper: Anthropology: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow".

*Yahot Christophe*, Université de Bouaké: "Sur un aspect du défi anthropologique du 3<sup>ème</sup> millénaire: globalisation et fonctionnarisation des valeurs".

*Isaac Wasike* University of Nairobi: "The role of Archaeology in Development: A Case Study in Kenya".

*Mwenda Ntarangwi*, Egerton University: "Behold the Past or beyond the Past? Taking Anthropology to the people in the next Millennium".

*Agbroffi Diamoi Joachim*, Université de Bouaké: "Anthropologie et Fonction Novatrice de l'esprit scientifique"

*Godwin Rapando Murunga*, Kenyatta University: "Anthropology in Africa! What future for the Historian".

*Ngampouk V. Pemunta*: "African Anthropology and the Challenges of the third Millennium".

*Tangyie Maurice & Ngampouk Pemunta*, University of Yaounde I: "Africa in the shadow of globalisation".

*Victor Ngonidzashe Muzvidziwa* (Sociology Department University of Zimbabwe) "Continuities and Discontinuities in the Teaching of Anthropology in Zimbabwe"

*Christophe Messina & Paul Nkwi*, University of Yaounde I: "The evolution of Anthropology at the University of Yaounde: A struggle to assert a personality".

*Titrikou K.*, Université Nationale du Bénin: "L'Anthropologie à l'Université du Bénin: un aperçu historique et analytique".

Room 2

*Title of Session: "Health Challenges: HIV/AIDS Anthropological Perspectives"*

*Chairman: Anita Nudelman*, Ben Gurion University, Beer Sheva, Israel

*General Rapporteur: Isaac Nyamongo*, University of Nairobi, Kenya

*Anita Nudelman*, Ben Gurion University, Beer Sheva, Israel: "From Research to

Intervention: The Input of Anthropology in Sexual Health and AIDS Prevention

PAAA Conference Proceedings / Actes de la Conférence de l'APA

Yaounde (Cameroon), August 30<sup>th</sup> - September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1999 / Yaoundé(Cameroun), 30 Août - 2 Septembre 1999

Program for Ethiopian Immigrant Adolescents in Israel"

*Ayodele Samuel Jeged*, University of Ibadan: "Genderisation of illnesses in Yoruba culture: implications for theory and method in Medical Anthropology".

*Diana Gibson*, University of Western Cape: "Negotiating the new Health care system in South Africa: A cape town case study".

*Maurice N. Amutabi*, Moi University: "The impact of globalisation on the Health of the poor in Kenya: implications for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century".

*Simiyu Wandibba*, University of Nairobi: "Plural Uisgu Division in Western Kenya".

*Ngampouk V. Pemunta*, University of Yaounde I: "The social and cultural aspects of health care delivery: a case study of clients' perspective on indigenous medicines in Yaounde".

*Eunice Kamaara*, Moi University: "HIV/AIDS Challenges, and the need for positive sexual behaviour change in Kenya".

*Guy Armand Onambele*, Cotonou, Bénin: "Exploration d'un champ anthropologique à travers la sensibilisation des populations sur le VIH/SIDA par les organisations non gouvernementales(ONG) au Bénin".

*S. D. Muluye*, University of Nairobi: "Measuring the changing reproductive preference and family planning effort in Kenya using the standardisation approach a critical analysis".

*Kawango Agot*, Moi University: "Health care is in shambles in Africa"(Lyun,1994:256): What's the context?"

*Kawango Agot*, Moi University: "Whither the institution of widow inheritance in the era of HIV/AIDS? Culture versus health".

*Joyce Wairimu Kimani*, Egerton University: "Women and AIDS: The Kenyan experience".

*Vincent Mutua*, Moi University: Sociocultural barriers to condom use in Kisumu District Western Kenya

*Mebenga Luc Tamba*, University of Yaounde I: "Education sexuelle traditionnelle de la jeune fille Beti du Cameroun".

*Deusdedit Otieno Ojala*, Nairobi, Kenya.

*Donald Anye & Ngampouk Pemunta*, University of Yaounde I: "A social Epidemiology of and the Sociocultural determinants of cigarette smoking".

*C. O. Izugbara*, University of Uyo, Uyo Akwa Ibom State: "Uyo: Methodological Issues Arising from Studies of Local Notions of Malasia in Two Nigerian Ethnic Groups: Lessons For 21<sup>st</sup> Century Researcher".

*Clara Fayorsey*, University of Ghana, Legon Ghana: "The PsychoSocial and Cultural Contexts of HIV/AIDS in Ghana Challenges for the Next Millenium".

*Charlotte Lwanga*:

#### 18H3020H00 BUSINESS MEETING OF PAAA NETWORKS (Hotel Royal)

TUESDAY, AUGUST 31, 1999

##### 08H30 PLENARY SESSION

*Keynote Address: Thomas Bierschenk*, Johannes Gutenberg University, Germany: "Changement social en Afrique et rôle de l'Anthropologie"

*Chairman: Dedy Seri*, Université d'Abidjan

*Rapporteur: Bayle Kamanda*, Ministry of Scientific Research, Yaounde

##### 09H30 DISCUSSIONS

##### 10H00 COFFEE BREAK

##### 10H30 SCIENTIFIC SESSIONS

Room 1

*Title of Session: "NGOs: use and misuse of Anthropology"*

*Chairman: Cosme Dikoume*, IPD, Douala

*Rapporteur: Ndonko Flavien*, University of Yaoundé I

*Cosme Dikoume*, IPD, Douala: "Les ONGs du Cameroun constituentelles le levain pour le tiers systèmes?"

*Gabriel Kum Ndong/Nde/Nguo* Yaounde I: "A paper on the use and misuse of NGO to Anthropology ( Participation and the Civil Society)"

*Albert Clotaire*, Bangui RCA: "Les ONG: usage et mauvais usage de l'Anthropologie".

*George Akwah Niba*, Yaounde I: "Pratiques socioculturelles africaines et mises sur pied de la modernité: Reconsidérer l'approche anthropologique du local et du global".

*Dimanche Valentin Gossala*, Enseignant Chercheur, Université de Bangui: "Les ONGs: L'usage et mauvais usage de l'Anthropologie"

*Guy Patrice Dkamela*, University of Yaounde I: "Lectures des mutations socioéconomiques chez les Fang de la région de Bipindi (Sud Cameroun) sous le prisme de leurs rapports a l'animal sauvage"

*Tsalefac Maurice/ Nkwambi Wilfred/ Tatah Peter/ Nguofo Roger/ Djoumessi*

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PAAA Conference Proceedings / Actes de la Conférence de l'APA

Yaounde (Cameroun), August 30<sup>th</sup> - September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1999 / Yaoundé(Cameroun), 30 Août - 2 Septembre 1999

*Tatsangue, Yaounde I: "The integration of ethnoclimatological data in environmental management in a humid tropical mountain: case study of mount Oku Cameroon".*

*Tsalefac Maurice/ Nkwambi Wilfred/ Tatah Peter/ Nguofo Roger/ Djoumessi Tatsangue, University of Yaounde I: "Cultural dynamics and environmental degradation on mount Oku: Cameroon".*

#### **Room 2**

*Title of Session: "Anthropological Focus on Environment"*

*Chairman: Lapika Dimonfu, Université de Kinshasa*

*Rapporteur: Tiayon Francois, University of Yaounde I*

*Lapika Dimonfu, Université de Kinshasa: "L'intégration des savoirs traditionnels dans la gestion de la biodiversité en Afrique Centrale".*

*John Sharp, University of Stellenbosch: "Starting A Proper Life: Land Invasion and local Government Response in Cape Town"*

*Ayobami T. Salami, Obafemi Awolowo University: "The role of local communities in sustainable development: a case study of forest management in rural SW Nigeria".*

*Ayobami T. Salami, Obafemi Awolowo University: "Settlement evolution, cultural practices and the quality of rural development in SW Nigeria".*

*Obododimma Oha, University of Ibadan: "signs, cities, and designs of capacities: the semiotics of road monuments in Nigeria".*

*J.A Mope Simo, MINREST, Yaounde: "The quest for social considerations in the certification of forest management in Cameroon: case study from the Southern Bakundu Forest Reserve Area".*

*Fasidi I.O /Adegeye A.O, Uni. of Ibadan: "Degradation of wood wastes by Pleurotus tuberregium".*

*J. N Kareithi, Moi Univ Nomads of the drought and social mechanisms of survival: stress and resilience of kinship and community values in North Western Kenya.*

*M.A.O Aluko, Awolowo University: "Social dimensions and consequences of Environmental Degradation in the Niger Delta: Suggestions for the next millennium."*

*Chris Uroh, University of Ibadan: "Sentenced by tradition: myth and the gender question in Africa".*

*S. Oluwale Ogundele, University of Ibadan: "Aspects of Ungwai Agriculture: An anthropological analysis".*

*Helen Ipara, University of Nairobi: "An Anthropological approach to social Research in wildlife Conservation in the next Millennium".*

*Abiodun J. Ogunbodede: "Sustainable Development and environmental Health Problems in Africa: A critique".*

*P.W. Mamimine, Department of Sociology, University of Zimbabwe: "One man's ecotourism is another man's ecoterrorism"*

*George Omondi Otieno, Institute of African Studies University of Nairobi Kenya: "Community Its Determination In the Kiambu Agroecosystem: The Case For Agroecosystem Health"*

*Oyerinde, Oyebade Kunle, Department of Public Administration, Faculty of administration Obafemi Awolowo University, IleIfe, Nigeria: "Environmental Crisis In Nigeria: A Critical Assesment Of StateCentric Approach To Forest Administration In SouthWestern Nigeria Since The 1960S"*

*Norbert Gami, ECOFAC/APFT Librville Gabon: "Conservation, valorisation des ressources naturelles, gestion participative et developpement en milieu forestier du Nord Congo Brazaville"*

*Yenshu Vubo Emmanuel, University of Buca: "Perception of Natural Hazards:*

*The Case for a Symetrical Anthropology"*

**12H00 LUNCH BREAK**

#### **14H00 PLENARY SESSION**

*Keynote Address: Johan Meiring, Director of Anthropological Services*

*Ministries and Constitutional Affairs & Welile Khuzakuyo: "South African Traditional Leadership and Institutions"*

*Chairman: Paul Nkwi, University of Yaounde I*

*Rapporteur: Francis Njilie, Program Officer, PAAA Secretariat*

#### **15H00 DISCUSSIONS**

#### **15H30 COFFEE BREAK**

#### **16H00 SCIENTIFIC SESSIONS**

##### **Room 1**

*Title of Session: "Some applied issues in Anthropology"*

*Chairman: Godwin Nukunya, University of Ghana, Legon*

*Rapporteur: Tatah Mentah, University of Yaounde II*

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*PAAA Conference Proceedings / Actes de la Conférence de l'APA*

*Yaounde (Cameroon), August 30<sup>th</sup> - September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1999 / Yaoundé(Cameroun), 30 Août - 2 Septembre 1999*



*El Nofely*, Nat. Res Center, Cairo, Egypt: "Human Genome and African Response"  
*Maxwell Owusu*, University of Michigan: "Creating Communities: Liberian Refugee Camps in Ghana".  
*Paraiko Sergio Noël*, Cotonou Benin: "Le phénomène du sous logement à Cotonou".  
*Aly El-Nofely*, National Research Centre, Cairo, Egypt: "Differential Impact of SocioCultural factors on Physique of a Juvenile and Elderly African Population".  
*Aoudou Charles*: "Impact of SocioCultural Factors in Program Implementation"  
*Ajaga Nji*, Ministry of Higher Education: "SocioCultural Determinants of the current status of the Cameroonian Woman: Implications for the family in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century".  
*Roselyne H. Lung'aha*, Moi University Eldoret Kenya: "What colour is the struggle for Gender Equity in Kenya? The missing Anthropological contribution".  
*Steven Robins*, University of the Western Cape: "The making of a new social movement in the Northern Cape? Encountering new indigenous traditions and the bureaucratic state after apartheid".  
*Obododimma Oha*, University of Ibadan, Nigeria: "The Wishes that become Horses: the Politics and Rhetoric of Igbo Search for Identity"  
*Khaukanani N. Mavhungu*, University of Stellenbosch, Republic of South Africa:  
*Rebecca Amin*, University of Yaounde I: "Collective decision making through Non Governmental Organisations a route to the empowerment of the Cameroon woman".  
*Joshua J. Akong'a*, Moi University: "Basic Personality Studies For national Development: a Challenge for Africa".  
*Christophe Bertrand Messina*, University Yaounde I: "Le Niobo chez les Ewondo".  
*Tuyizere Alice*, School of Education Kampala: "Gender and Community Development Programmes in the New Millennium".  
*Eunice L. Kyomugisha*, Makerere University: "Women in politics: The Highlights and Setbacks during the 1998 Local Council Elections in Uganda".  
*Margaret NigerThomas*, University of Leiden: "Women's innovative approaches to agricultural produce buying within the rural informal sector in Cameroon: The case of PeriUrban Manfe"  
*Malka Shalva*, Israel: "Between Reggae and Rap: Music and Identity among Ethiopian Youth"  
*Awason*, University of Buea: "Traditional Rulers, Principles of Legitimation, shifting Loyalties in Colonial and Post Colonial Cameroon"  
**Room 2:**  
*Title of Session: "The African Family in Crisis"*  
*Chairman: Assih Ashira*, Ministre des Affaires Sociales, Togo  
*Rapporteur: Beat Paulette Songue*, Université de Yaounde I  
*Felix Ackebo*, UNICEF, Abidjan, "Les enfants de la rue en Cote d'Ivoire: Conséquences d'une situation économique et sociale".  
*Clifford O. Odimegwu/Christian Okengbo*, Awolowo University: "The Anthropology of Violence against the GirlChild in Abakaliki, Nigeria".  
*Njiale Jean Marie*, University of Yaounde I: "La Famille Africaine en Crise: Crise de l'éducation ou crise des modèles sociaux".  
*Eunice Kamaara*, Moi University: "The challenges of social change to the African Family: a situational analysis of the family in Kenya".  
*Bayie Kamanda*, MINREST Yaounde, Cameroon: "Contemporary Family Crises: Manifestations, Causes And Consequences".  
*M.F.C. Bourdillon*, University of Zimbabwe: "Working Children in Zimbabwe"  
*Keubou Desire Francis*, Université de Yaounde I "La Crise Linguistique en Afrique".  
*Cosme Dikoume*, IPD, Douala: "Causes effectives de la crise de la famille africaine".

#### 18H3020H00 BUSINESS MEETING: GOVERNING COUNCIL (Hotel ROYAL)

#### WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup> 1999

##### 08H30 PLENARY SESSION

*Keynote Paper: Leon Shelef*, TelAviv University: "Tribalism A Vague term yet Valid".

*Chairman: Prof. Kouakou N'guessan F.*, Recteur, Université de Bouaké

*Rapporteur: Saïbou Nassourou*, University of Yaounde I,

##### 09H30 DISCUSSION

##### 10H00 COFFEE BREAK

##### 10H30 SCIENTIFIC SESSIONS

###### Room 1

*Title of Session: "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts"*

*Chairman: Anaclet Bissielo*, Université Omar Bongo, Libreville, Gabon

*Rapporteur: Francis Beng Nyamjoh*, University of Buea, Cameroon

*Richard R. Akankwasa*, Makerere University: "What can Schools contribute? The challenge of ethnic conflict and National integration in the republic of Rwanda".

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**John M. Mwaruvie**, Moi University: "Political Party Cooperation in post election as ethnic Tensions (Kenyan Case)".

**Joshua O. Osamba**, Egerton University: "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts in Africa: Some Lessons From Kenya".

**Steven Robins**, University of the Western Cape: "The Making of a New Social Movement in the Northern Cape? Encountering New Indigenous Traditions and The Bureaucratic State after Apartheid".

**Wilfred K. S' bbo**, Nairobi, Kenya: "Ethnicity And Coexistence Among Kenyan People".

**Ifeanyi Onyeonoru**, University of Ibadan: "*Civil Society, Ethnicity and Conflicts: The Theoretical Significance of The Diverse Public Realms in Africa*".

**Emeka E. N. Obioha**, University of Ibadan: "Ethnic conflicts and the problem of resolution in the contemporary Africa: a case study for "African Options and Alternatives".

**Santen (van) Jose C. M.**, University of Leiden: "Gender and the Debates on Ethnicity in Africanist Anthropology: Inclusion in the Third Millennium."

**Baililago Louis**, Université de Bangui: "L'Ethnie comme homochromie des luttes politique en Afrique".

**Agbroffi Diamoi Joachim**, Université de Bouaké: "De l'emprunt culturel aux conflits ethniques en Cote D'Ivoire".

**Ngampouk V. Pemunta**, Université de Yaoundé I: "Ethnic Perceptions, Interaction and the Implications for the national Integration".

**Abayie Boaten**, University of Ghana, Legon: "Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts in Africa: Ghana's example".

**Niba Matthias L.**, University of Yaounde I: "Ethnic Tensions in the Bafut Kingdom of the Northwest of Cameroon".

**Dossou Yovo Alfred**, Cotonou Benin: "Aspects socioanthropologiques de la gestion durable des ressources naturelles: Formations végétales au Bénin".

**Francis Beng Nyamnjoh/Piet Konings**, University of Buea: "Construction and Deconstruction: Anglophones or Autochtones".

**Onigu Otite**, University of Ibadan: "Managing ethnicplurality, the Nigerian experience".

**Amelie Valentine Tabi**, University of Dschang: "Democratisation and the national question in Cameroon: building democracy with ethnicity".

**Barongo Ateenyi**, Makerere Institute of Social Research Makerere University Kampala Uganda: "Ethnic Conflict In Africa: Is It The Issue".

**Pat. O. Agboro**, Department of Philosophy University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria: "The Clash of the Titans: A ReExamination of Ethnic Conflicts in Africa".

**Agossou Christian**, Université Nationale du Bénin: "Enjeux politiques et démocratie: entre "Adogocratie" et ralliement ethnique".

**Isaac Olawale**, University of Ibadan, Nigeria: "The role of culture in ethnic conflicts and conflict transformation in Africa".

**Tata Simon Ngege**, University of Yaounde I: "Ethnicity, violence and multiparty Democracy in Africa".

**Ebiyuwa T. Ladoke Akintola**, University of Technology, Ogbomoso, Nigeria: "Ethnic conflicts, social dislocation and the search for a new order in Africa".

**Nantang Jua**, University of Buca, Cameroon: "EthnoNet Africa: Multiethnicity, Multiculturalism in Africa".

**Forje John W.**, CARAD, Yaounde, Cameroon: "The Politics of Democratisation, Ethnicity and its Management in Africa; with Experience from Cameroon".

**Room 2**

**Title of Session:** "Population Issues And Anthropology: Fertility Crisis"

**Chairman:** ABC Ocholla Ayayc, University of Nairobi

**Rapporteur:** Charles Audou, University of Yaounde, I.

**Dorcas Mofoluwake Akande**, Dept of English Faculty of Arts O.A.U, Ilefe, Nigeria: "The Dialectics of Femininity in Nigeria And Diaspora in the New Millinium".

**Fr. Tatah H. Mbuy**, Fuli Parish, Belo SubDivision, Kom: "African Traditional Religion as the SocioCultural Background of the African in the Third Millennium."

**Cica Rosaline Tohou**, Université Nationale du Benin: "Grossesses des adolescents en milieu scolaire au Benin: le cas de collegiennes de Cotonou".

**Abe N'Doumby Noel**, Université de Bouaké: "la relation genre et ses implications sociologiques dans le contexte ivoirien".

**Kennifer Mafulu**, University of Zambia: "Correlates of the low performance of the girl-child in LusakaZambia".

**Tatah Mentan**, University of Yaounde II: "Globalisation, Exploitation and the State In Africa: The Final Conquest?".

**Temungah Joseph Nyambah**, University of Yaounde II: "Cultural Pluralism and Globalisation: What Perspectives for Africa".

*G. S. Friedman*: "Christianity in East Africa: The Role of Churches in the Struggle for Political Change"

*Nguessam A. M. Thérèse*, Université de Bouaké: "La planification familiale dans les habitats sociaux en milieu urbain en Côte d'Ivoire: L'exemple du quartier Odiennékourani à Bouaké"

**12H30 LUNCH BREAK**

**14H30-16H30 GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PAAA**

**17H00-18H00 CLOSING CEREMONY**

1. Reading of the Resolutions
2. Speech by the President of PAAA
3. Speech by Prof. Kouakou Nguessan, Président Univ. of Bouake
4. Closing Speech by the Rector of Yaounde University I,

**19H30-23H00 CELEBRATION OF THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY: FOYER BANDJOUN**

1. Buffet Dinner for all Participants
2. Cultural Animation
3. Opening Speech of the PAAA President
4. Traditional Dances
5. Sketches
6. Choral music
7. A word from the President of WennerGren Foundation
8. A word from the Rector, University of Yaounde I
9. Special PAAA Awards

**THURSDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1999**

**07H00 DEPARTURE FOR AN ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD TRIP<sup>(\*)</sup>**

**11H00 ARRIVAL IN BAFOUSSAM**

**12H00 LUNCH**

**13H00 VISIT TO FOUMBAN (Village artisanal)**

**16H00 TRAVEL TO BAMENDA (Ayaba Hotel)**



In 1999 (August 30 – September 2) the Pan African Anthropological Association (PAAA) marked the 10th anniversary of its creation by holding its 9th Annual Conference in Yaounde, Cameroon – the city and country of its birth. The conference, themed “The Anthropology of Africa: Challenges for the 21st Century”, was attended by some seventy participants, mostly African. Among the international participants was Dr Sydel Silverman, President of the Wenner Gren Foundation at the time – a long term partner of the PAAA; she was present at the inaugural conference in 1988. The conference proceedings were initially published in 2000 with very limited circulation. Given the continued relevance of the papers presented, and in view of the call by the President of the PAAA for African anthropologists to reunite anthropological theory and practice in the teaching programmes of African universities, the PAAA is pleased to republish the proceedings of its landmark 9th Annual Conference. The book consists of forty three chapters divided into eight parts, namely: i) teaching anthropology in the decades ahead; ii) Health Challenges: HIV/AIDS Anthropological Perspectives; iii) NGOS: Use and Misuse of Anthropology; iv) Anthropological Focus on Environment; v) Some Applied Issues in Anthropology; vi) The African Family in Crisis; vii) Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts; and viii) Population issues and anthropology: Fertility Crisis. Paul Nkwu concludes his introduction to the volume with these words: “The Anthropology of Africa will remain for a long time, fundamentally applied if it is to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.”

PAULNCHOJINKWI, Founding President of the Pan African Anthropological Association, is currently Deputy Vice Chancellor of the Catholic University of Cameroon, Bamenda, following his retirement as Professor of Anthropology at the University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon.



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